

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE NEVADA NEWSPAPER CONFERENCE

Conference Speakers: Robert D. Armstrong, Ev Landers, Tom Wixson, Susan Conway,  
John M. Townley, Karen Gash, Robert E. Blesse

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## Description

On June 7, 1985, the Special Collections Department of the University of Nevada, Reno held a conference entitled, "Nevada's Newspapers: A Historical Legacy." The conference, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, was a component of the Nevada Newspaper Project, a planning project designed to survey, catalogue, and microfilm the state's newspapers. The purposes of the conference were to describe the function and use of the state's newspapers since the late 1850s, and to help build statewide cooperation for the Nevada Newspaper Project, then in its formative stage.

Conference presenters came from a variety of backgrounds and presented materials relevant to teachers, librarians, journalists, and historians, as well as the casual reader. Speakers at the conference include Robert Armstrong, author of *Nevada Printing History: A Bibliography of Imprints and Publications 1858-1880*; Ev Landers, managing editor of the *Reno Gazette-Journal*; Tom Wixson of the Gardnerville, Nevada, weekly *Record Courier*; Susan Conway of the University of Nevada, Reno Library; John Townley, author of *Tough Little Town on the Truckee: Reno 1868-1900*; Karen Gash, coauthor of *The Newspapers of Nevada: A History and Bibliography 1854-1979*; and Robert Blesse, Head of the University's Special Collections Department and Project Director of the Nevada Newspaper Conference.

The University of Nevada Oral History Program welcomed the opportunity to publish the proceedings of this conference, and make them part of its permanent collection.



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NEVADA NEWSPAPER CONFERENCE**

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Edited by Karen Rix Gash

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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## PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber  
Director, UNOHP  
July 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

On June 7, 1985, the Special Collections Department of the University of Nevada, Reno held a conference entitled, "Nevada's Newspapers: A Historical Legacy." The conference, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, was a component of the Nevada Newspaper Project, a planning project designed to survey, catalogue, and microfilm the state's newspapers. The purpose of the conference was to describe the function and use of the state's newspapers since the late 1850s. A second aim of the conference was to help build statewide cooperation for the Nevada Newspaper Project, then in its formative stage.

Conference presenters came from a variety of backgrounds and presented materials relevant to teachers, librarians, journalists, and historians, as well as the casual reader. It was hoped that these varied perspectives would ensure an informed, well-balanced presentation on the history and role of Nevada

newspapers. Speakers at the conference included Robert Armstrong, author of *Nevada Printing History: A Bibliography of Imprints and Publications 1858-1880*; Ev Landers, managing editor of the *Reno Gazette-Journal*; Tom Wixon of the Gardnerville, Nevada, weekly *Record Courier*; Susan Conway of the University of Nevada, Reno Library; John Townley, author of *Tough Little Town on the Truckee: Reno 1868-1900*; Karen Gash, coauthor of *The Newspapers of Nevada: A History and Bibliography 1854-1979*; and Robert Blesse, Head of the University's Special Collections Department and Project Director of the Nevada Newspaper Conference.

The University of Nevada Oral History Program welcomed the opportunity to publish the proceedings of this conference, and make them a part of its permanent collection. Robert Armstrong and Karen Gash presented completed papers, which are reproduced here; all other presenters spoke from notes, and their presentations were

tape-recorded and transcribed. In the spring of 1990, the manuscript of the proceedings was delivered to the Oral History Program for publication. We are pleased to have been a part of this worthy project.

Helen M. Blue  
Oral History Program  
December, 1990

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## NEWSPAPERING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEVADA

*Robert D. Armstrong is the former head of the University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections Department. He is the author of Nevada Printing History: A Bibliography of Imprints and Publications 1858-1880. Mr. Armstrong is currently the librarian for the Nevada Mental Health Institute.*

Everyone knows what newspapers are for: we get news from them. But most of us also have one or more other uses to put our newspapers to. Those who want to or need to watch their budgets or their diets use the newspaper to learn which market has the least expensive asparagus or ground meat or low-salt garbanzos this week. Contractors use it to find the places and times and conditions of bidding on government contracts. Civil libertarians look to the newspaper as the protector of First Amendment freedoms—at least they do when they are not despairing of its failures in that line. Others think of it as entertainment or as an educational tool or a lining for the bird cage, an interpretation of the communities we live in and the events

that affect us, a way to notify our posterity that we have been born, spent some time here, and died. But those who do not work directly in the newspaper business infrequently recognize it as just that, a business that must support wholly or in part a large number of people, locally and elsewhere. So if it cannot make enough money it simply quits, leaving those of us who love to excoriate newspapers for their shortcomings, real and not so real, the poorer for it. I won't comment on the ways that contemporary newspapers make their daily dollar, but I would like to spend some time on the business aspects of newspapering in this state during the formative years.

We have become, as you know, a society of specialists. When our teeth hurt we go to a dentist, who may then send us on to an endodontist or a periodontist. Grocers and librarians and house builders and astronauts specialize, too. And when we want a piece of printing done we are also given a choice of specialists. If we have a simple job requiring only that we provide clean, camera-ready copy, we can go to any of a number of quick-print

shops. In some cases we can even get printing of a sort done while shopping for peanut butter at the neighborhood supermarket. If the job is more complex, requiring a striking design, a choice of typefaces that reflects the character of the copy, and printing in several colors, we can find a shop to take care of those needs. If we are responsible for printing required by a government agency we use the bidding process to find our printer or, in some cases, we go to a publicly-owned printing office. And, of course, if we own a business that needs to make known the ready and inexpensive availability of running shoes or two-by-fours or flights to Honolulu, there are the advertising pages of the local newspaper. In the first couple of decades after the press came to Nevada, though, there was only one place to go for printing of any kind, complicated or simple, public or private. That place was the newspaper office and its associated job operation.

Job printing has been variously defined, but for our present purposes I'm going to suggest that we think of it as the non-newspaper printing done on one or two sheets of paper. That's not altogether satisfactory—some would include fairly lengthy books—but we needn't get too picky here. The sheets can be printed on both sides, of course, and folded, so pamphlets of up to sixteen pages fall easily within the definition—twice that if the resulting pamphlet is of very small dimensions, more yet if a large press is used. Playbills and party invitations and election tickets do, too; so do advertising flyers and reward posters, gubernatorial proclamations and time tables and bills of sale, theater programs and wedding announcements and menus and business cards. Those of you who have seen the printshop walls of the old *Sentinel* office in Eureka will understand what I mean.<sup>1</sup> What is important to recognize

here is that pieces of this size could be run off on the same press—usually a small one, at least in the beginning—that was used for printing the paper. It was possible, then, for a printer to establish, at small cost and with very little equipment, a newspaper *and* a job operation—and when the mining camp where he'd set up his press failed, as they so often did after a short time, he could pack up his relatively light printing plant and move it on to the next promising spot. But if it appeared that the town and the paper would both last for a while, specialization took over here, too, and presses designed and built for job work would be brought in.

Another way of defining job printing is to call it the money maker, the provider of the means to put out a newspaper, because without the dollars generated by job printing few publishers could have stayed in the newspaper business for very long. Until the late 1870s Nevada's newspapermen had the money maker all to themselves, at least when dealing with initiators of printing orders who chose to have their printing done here instead of sending it to California—but that's another story that we needn't get into just now. And even when the first separate job office was established it was not wholly independent of the newspaper that had spawned it, the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*. William Sutherland, a young and ambitious printer in the *Enterprise* office, began a job printing business about 1878, but he continued his association with the newspaper until he was firmly established.

Twenty years earlier, in Genoa the *Enterprise* had begun its peripatetic existence when a used Washington press was brought over the Sierra Nevada from the office of the *Placerville Mountain Democrat*. The same press was used to issue the weekly paper and to print whatever jobs the proprietors

could promote in the tiny Carson Valley community and its environs. A prospectus for the paper had been published sometime prior to the first issue of the *Enterprise* on December 18, 1858, but there is no doubt that it was printed in California, probably at the *Mountain Democrat* office.<sup>2</sup> Lucius Beebe quoted the text of the prospectus in his account of the *Enterprise*.<sup>3</sup> He probably never saw the prospectus itself. It's more likely that he borrowed from a history of the paper by Dan De Quille that was published, coincidentally, ninety-eight years ago today. De Quille gave there the full text; it came, he said, from a copy given to him by the brother of one of the paper's founders.<sup>4</sup> Only minor differences exist between the two versions.

The paper itself missed a few issues during the year it was in Genoa because of the difficulty of getting paper to print it on. Several of those that were issued came out on brown butcher paper, and at least one issue was printed on a half sheet—on the half shell, as one later wag put it. Because of the paper shortage the job printing part of the business may have suffered as well, though it could as easily have contributed to the shortage by drawing off paper that might otherwise have been used for the newspaper. It's certainly possible that a constitution for a provisional Territory of Nevada was published in mid-1859; the text appeared in the paper on July 30 and it would have been easy enough, and not at all uncommon, to use the same setting of type to put it out as a small pamphlet.<sup>5</sup> Both owners, Alfred James and William L. Jernegan, were passionately active in the movement for separation of western Utah Territory—the part that eventually became Nevada—from the distant government in Salt Lake City, and their personal involvement makes separate issue of the constitution even more likely. James's participation in a grand

jury hearing later in the year—he was clerk of court—and in the subsequent publication as a four-page pamphlet of its findings relative to what the area's gentiles looked upon as Mormon intolerance of religious freedom, is suggestive of his desire to publicize the separation effort.<sup>6</sup> So, paper shortage or not, the constitution and other pieces could have been published, but since the grand jury report is the only extant Genoa product of the *Enterprise* job office, we cannot be sure. Still, it seems almost certain, given the precarious economics of the newspaper business of the time and this particular paper's monopoly in western Utah, that the owners would have taken on as much job printing as they could, simply to stay in business. The job office's own ads, in the few issues of the paper that remain for the Genoa period, testify to that probability.

But they didn't stay in business. Before the end of the year James had dropped out of the partnership and the paper had moved up the road a few miles to the new town of Carson City. It didn't take long for Jernegan to prove what a poor businessman he was, and the paper soon became the sole property of Jonathan Williams, who had earlier bought James's share.

The paper stayed in Carson for another year, produced more job printing—undoubtedly more than the few examples that survive—and then moved on at the end of 1860 to Virginia City, where the action and presumably the dollars were. Before the year was out a new paper, the *Silver Age*, replaced the *Enterprise* in Carson City, and it is with this press that we can see the development of another kind of hedge against penury, namely, printing for the government.

During Abraham Lincoln's run for the presidency in 1860 he had as one of his strong supporters a printer from Keokuk, Iowa,

named Orion Clemens. After the election Clemens had let it be known that he was available to be named the secretary of any of the western territories except Utah, but when his personnel file began to include letters recommending him for no more than “a third or fourth grade clerkship in some one of the Bureaus of the Department of the Interior,” he no doubt felt himself lucky when President Lincoln nominated him to be secretary of the newly created Territory of Nevada.<sup>7</sup> Territorial printing was strictly controlled by the U.S. Treasury Department, with the secretary of each territory as the federal appointee on site. As one of his first official tasks after arriving in Nevada in 1861 Clemens wrote to the proprietors of the territory’s three papers asking whether they could or would take on the official printing when the legislature met later on that year. The *Washoe Times* in Silver City couldn’t; inadequate equipment was the stated reason, but it was in reality just about to go out of business. The *Enterprise* wouldn’t; the government’s methods of payment were judged to be both too silly and too slow. So, by default, the *Silver Age* became the territory’s first public printer.<sup>8</sup> And, because of some bureaucratic pack rats who hung onto everything, and some later federal archivists who recognized the value of that mindless act, we can study today the economics of one portion of the nineteenth-century newspaper business, the adjunct that took on the job printing for the federal government.

The records that make it possible are the result of an 1855 Treasury regulation that said, in essence, that if printers expected to be paid for work they did for the government they must prove not only that they’d done it but that it had followed federal specifications.<sup>9</sup> The proof was to be in the form of detailed vouchers made out by the secretary of the territory—not much of a chore for former

printer Clemens—accompanied by samples of each of the printed pieces described on the vouchers: legislative bills, reports of various administrative officers, forms, laws, journals, and such like. Only when the Washingtonians had satisfied themselves that they were not being taken in did they authorize full payment, but settlement was always many months, sometimes several years, after the job had been completed. And during Nevada’s territorial period, payment was not in the usual coin but in the discredited, and discounted, greenbacks. As late as 1871, nearly seven years after Nevada Territory had ceased to exist, the federal minions were badgering poor Orion, by then living in St. Louis, to recover what they considered to be overpayments to Nevada’s territorial printers. So the *Enterprise* people turned out to be both prophetic and sagacious; the way the government paid was indeed slow *and* silly.

These are the earliest charges for printing of any kind that we have for Nevada, and they exist in the National Archives for printing incidental to all three meetings of the territorial legislature, in 1861, 1862, and 1864.<sup>10</sup> And, although federal payments for this kind of printing can legitimately be counted as income for the newspapers that got the appointments as public printers—a different one for each of the sessions—it should be understood that prices paid were imposed from Washington and were invariable from territory to territory, regardless of local differences in transportation expenses, or equipment overhead, or printers’ wages.

Wages paid for job printing were not the same as those paid for newspaper printing, so a compositor who worked part of the time in the job office, with his time there split between government and locally-ordered work, and part on the newspaper, was paid on several different scales, and printers working



on morning and afternoon papers were paid differently as well. The earliest Nevada indication of these wage differentials appears in a volume containing the constitution and by-laws of the Washoe Typographical Union, the organization of Storey County printers, in 1863. Similar volumes were published in Virginia City in 1867, 1878, and 1889, giving us a good reflection of the way printers' wages—and by extension, the printing business—changed during the period. Unfortunately, the reflection does not glow and shimmer, since wages went steadily downward.

This is perhaps as good a place as any to explain that in the last century and well into this one the work “printer” referred exclusively to the skilled workers who set type, the men and women who made individual letters into words, lines columns, and pages, and ultimately into newspapers or pamphlets or books. These were the people who organized themselves into typographical unions, leaving those who ran the presses and kept them in working order to look out for themselves or to become aligned with other groups of laborers such as miners or mechanics. In many instances, of course, especially on small, country papers, the printer and pressman were one and the same. But in such cases he was probably owner and editor and business manager, too, and therefore uninterested in backshop hierarchical refinements.

Job printing contributed a sizable amount of a newspaper's income throughout the period, but two related sources of revenue—legal notices and business advertising, both in the newspapers themselves—added their share. Competition for the right to print county notices and official proceedings of commissioners and grand juries was intense, especially when the politics of two bidders in the same community differed. Contracts

to print a local government's business were usually for six months, long enough for the short-ender in the bidding process to become wrathful over each of his successful competitor's real or imagined gaucheries and illegalities, and to point them out, snidely and at length, in his own paper. Such venomous appraisals seldom had any practical effect, however, since the political makeup of the governing body, and not attacks by the loser, almost always determined who would win the printing contract. Occasionally these contracts were granted for a month only, but instead of magnifying journalistic rivalries the shorter period tended to defuse antagonisms; in some cases two papers would quite happily trade the privilege each month.

Advertising by private parties in the newspapers was very important indeed, and no publisher could expect to keep going if that source dried up. All too often one reads what are sometimes gruff, sometimes whining complaints, but always containing an undercurrent of terror, about local businessmen who refused to support the paper with their ads. The comments of more than one editor made it clear that he would try to make it through the political season, with its ads for candidates and at least the hope of printing election tickets for one of the political parties, and then, as far as he was concerned, the town could see how it liked getting along without his newspaper. Usually the town liked it just fine. One paper, the *Index* of Carson City, began its life in 1880 with nearly half of its space empty; the unused columns, it was pointed out, were ready and waiting for advertisers to fill them, and eventually they did.<sup>11</sup> The *Index* had followed an unusual course, though, by operating strictly as a job operation for nearly two years prior to the newspaper's first appearance, so it may be supposed that the owner fully expected

former customers to become future customers of the new medium. Many papers paid higher tribute to advertisers than to readers, noting from time to time that several items of local news, probably the very reason that most subscribers bought the paper, had been left out because space was needed for new ads.

I've nattered on for some little while about newspapers as published in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but since we're sneaking up rapidly on the twenty-first century it may be that some of you haven't seen or used papers of that era and can't easily envision what they looked like. So let me describe one for you.

The typical Nevada newspaper of the period, whether issued weekly or daily, the most common frequencies, was a four-pager, a single sheet of paper folded once. The size of the page was determined by the size of the press, and the number of columns by both the size of the page and the size of type used. The sheet was printed before folding, with the outside pages—pages one and four—printed at the same time; it was then turned over and the inside pages—those numbered two and three—were printed. The outside pages could, in fact, be printed long before those on the inside, during slow times, by using long-standing ads, seldom-changed legal notices, and what was called boilerplate, which consisted of syndicated material and repeated items such as the masthead that were available in plate or in mat form. The inner pages, then, could be saved for newer ads or short-time ads; international, national, and regional news received telegraphically; items copied from other newspapers, an acceptable practice if proper credit was given (but one to be despised if it was not); and local items, which might consist of editorial matter, news of the courts, letters, notices of weddings and births and funerals, reviews of theatrical

performances, mining news, and lies. And parenthetically, Nevada harbored some of the West's better liars. The gloriously-conceived hoaxes of Mark Twain and Dan De Quille come to mind, of course, but the long and honorable roster also includes such names as Sam Davis, Arthur McEwen, "Lying Jim" Townsend, and Fred H. Hart. Hart, whose "Sazerac Lying Club" columns in Austin's *Reese River Reveille* were thought to be good enough to publish as a book, even lied under more than one name.<sup>12</sup> And it was the *Reveille*, always ready to be different, always eager to be noticed, that bucked an almost invariable practice and in the eighties printed its local news on page one.

Special processes such as multicolor printing and facsimile transmission of news photographs either did not yet exist or were unavailable to Nevada newspapers. This is not to say that papers were wholly devoid of color—entire issues, or at least one side of a sheet, were sometimes printed with colored ink—or that they lacked illustrations. Standard cuts and engravings of railroad trains, elephants, printing presses, and preposterously bustled ladies were available, and it was a dull editor who could not use over and over again the same shadowy portrait to represent whichever relatively unknown personage was the subject of a current news story. Advance men of traveling shows such as circuses usually provided intricate stereotype plates for their newspaper advertising. But circuses were mixed blessings: while the ads enlivened the appearance of the paper considerably, brought in no small amount of income, and gave local reporters something to write about for weeks, circuses also typically furnished their own non-newspaper advertising, even to the point of hiring local urchins to paste bills on fences and sides of buildings, thus depriving the offices of what could have been profitable job printing orders.

It was not until the century was over, in 1901, that the first of Ottmar Mergenthaler's Linotype machines was put to work on a Nevada newspaper, the *Reno Gazette*.<sup>13</sup> Until then every Nevada printer working on a daily paper was required to stand, rarely to sit, before the type case for long hours every day, six days a week, picking up individual pieces of type, called sorts, and arranging them in a composing stick to make lines of type. It's no wonder, with the long days and wearying drudgery attached to the job, that when a printer found himself with no more v's or s's or q's—and a real need for v's or s's or q's—he was said to be “out of sorts.” The printer's duties varied from office to office, depending in part upon whether a typographical union had been organized locally—I know of only three in Nevada during the period—and on individual shop rules, but in very broad terms what he did can be described as setting the type, transferring it to the composing stone, then locking it up into metal frames called chases and carrying them to the pressman. When the material came back from the pressroom several things could happen. If an article or editorial or even a paid advertisement had been singled out to be issued as a pamphlet, the columns were shortened and made up, usually, into double-column pages. The pages were then arranged—“imposed” is the printer's term—so that the printed sheet, when folded into pages and cut, would come out in proper numerical order. The type might be kept standing for a while if the resulting pamphlet was expected to be popular enough to be reprinted, and if a long-term need was anticipated a stereotype plate could be made so as not to hold up the type for too long. Usually, though, when the pressman had done his part the printer cleaned the type and distributed it into the proper boxes in his cases for use in the next day's paper. The type

he used, incidentally, was likely to have been manufactured abroad, often in Edinburgh. Scottish type was particularly well thought of, since it was cheaper and considered to be more durable than the local article and, despite efforts by American type founders to have restrictive tariffs enacted on imported type, it remained the first choice of a good many printers and newspapermen in this country.

Once the pressman had taken charge of what the printer had done he had to do a number of things, irrespective of what kind of press he was using and whether he was printing a newspaper or a pamphlet or an invitation to a hanging. It was his job to be certain that the type delivered to him was of consistent height and would print evenly, with no light spots or blurred areas. The process he went through, called “make-ready,” was most often necessary when a mixture of old and new type was used, and was often made worse when brass rule or wood cuts or boilerplate were added to the mix. It was an intricate procedure, involving a reduction in height for a few parts of the form, and the delicate building up of others, sometimes with a single thickness of very thin paper making enough difference to correct the impression. It was necessary, too, that his press be in good working order, well lubricated and ready for use, and that a reliable source of power be available. The original owners of the *Territorial Enterprise* and many, many other proprietors of small newspapers in small towns used strong arms, strong backs, and strong legs to pull a large wooden bar toward them, thus pressing a metal platen against the inked type and producing a readable impression on the paper that had been placed over the type. Variations on the theme abounded, but the principle remained the same, i.e., type on one side, platen on

the other, and paper in the middle, with one or another means used to bring the parts of the sandwich together. Steam was a popular and frequently used power source, chiefly because of its low cost and reliability: the first product of a steam-powered press in Nevada was the July 31, 1863, issue of the *Enterprise*.<sup>14</sup> Newspapers with an abundant supply of running water sometimes used water wheels to run their presses.<sup>15</sup> In July of 1882 the *Reno Gazette*, which used water to run its newspaper presses, found that during the day townspeople let their water run so as to be sure their carrots and squash and watermelons would thrive in the hot summer weather. Water pressure was thus reduced below the level necessary to run the presses, so the editor rather plaintively asked “those who love us” to shut off their water for four of the afternoon’s hottest hours. Within a week he had learned something of the practicalities of love, and the water power scheme had been abandoned, whereupon a Comstock editorialist observed that while the *Gazette’s* presses were now run by steam, the paper was run, as usual, by wind. Within a month the *Gazette’s* morning rival, the *Nevada State Journal*, had converted from steam to water, perhaps using the *Gazette’s* discarded water wheel.<sup>16</sup> The *Journal* was printed at night, of course, for morning distribution, and did not have Reno’s prize tomatoes as rivals for the precious water.

I haven’t talked at all about the presses themselves, except to mention once or twice the most popular of the hand presses in use during the beginnings of newspaper printing here, the Washington. Those of you who would like to see one of these durable wonders might want to look in on the pressroom of the Black Rock Press on the second floor of the UNR library. The Washington there is dwarfed by the Columbian press that dominates the

room, and isn’t of a size that would have been practicable for putting out daily newspapers, but it’s real, it works, and if your imagination can enlarge it severalfold you can get a good idea of the kind of machinery that started newspaper offices all over the West. The real reason I’ve said so little about the presses, though—and will say no more—is that I know so little about them. Instead, I want to use my remaining minutes to mention some of the special products of the newspaper offices, and to talk about some of the special people who worked in those offices.

Among the newspaper-related publications was the extra. I say it was related, though in some cases it actually was a newspaper, complete with lists of delinquent taxpayers and ads for purgatives and restorers of masculine vigor, and with the story that was thought important enough to warrant an out-of-time edition taking up, as often as not, much less than a single column. Frequently, though, an extra would be issued as a broadside on a half- or quarter-sheet, with the entire text devoted to a train wreck or a prison break or a disaster in the mines or some other equally calamitous event. During the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 the *Reese River Reveille* issued frequent extras. The practice almost halted before the war did, though, when Austin’s French citizens decided the paper was announcing Prussian victories only to sell newspapers to the town’s Germans; local Germans blamed French triumphs on the *Reveille*, too. Both of these types of extras would be sold on the streets, but if little was known, or all there was to know took up little space, a single copy or two, printed on very small slips of paper, might be tacked up on a bulletin board in front of the office. The *Gold Hill News* told the result of a Fourth of July horse race in Kentucky this way, on an extra only two inches square.<sup>17</sup> That’s the least

ostentatious example of an extra I know of. I think it's right to wonder, though, if the size of the sheet might have been significantly larger if the locally-owned horse had won.

Another of the special, infrequent products of the newspaper press was the carrier's address. It happened once a year, at the turning of the year, and it was a kind of sop to the young, and sometimes not-so-young men who, blizzards and rattlesnakes notwithstanding, had made home deliveries throughout the year. The carrier's address was an old but fading journalistic custom by the time Nevada came into being, and it never really caught on here, though there are extant examples from the 1870s and 1880s. Usually the carrier or the printer's devil or someone else who was not on the regular writing staff would compose a summary, in frightfully bad verse, of significant events of the year just past. A printer would then perpetrate a design of equal taste, and the carrier would deliver the resulting abomination to his customers on New Year's Day, expecting, and usually getting, a gratuity for his labors. In the waning years of the practice there grew up an industry of sorts that supplied unimaginative carriers with ready-made, generalized and homogenized addresses that were presumably fit for any locale in the country. Some of these were distributed in Nevada, but I haven't seen any of them. Among Nevada's authors of carrier's addresses who went on to better paydays was Bob Davis, younger brother of the Carson *Appeal's* Sam Davis, who became a novelist and playwright, managing editor of a national stable of magazines, and columnist for the New York *Sun*. And Alfred Chartz, who killed a man and was sentenced to life in prison for it, was later pardoned and became a respected journalist, businessman, and attorney; he, too, had issued a carrier's address during his days in Eureka.

It may surprise some of you that I've come this far in a discussion of Nevada newspapering with only bare mention of Mark Twain and Dan De Quille and Sam Davis, and none at all of such journalistic luminaries as Myron Angel, Alf Doten, Wells Drury, Joe Goodman, and Denis McCarthy, as well as Reno's own Robert Fulton and Christopher Columbus Powning. Well, they've been mentioned now, so I'd like to go on to talk briefly of some of the lesser-known contributors to the history of Nevada's newspapers.

There was Conrad Wiegand, a mercurial and quixotic soul whose constant journalistic dudgeon led, almost inevitably, to a series of beatings. Two Carson City newspapermen—R. R. Parkinson, called "the Deacon," and C. N. Harris, known as "Judge"—had unpleasant physical and juridical run-ins with Sam Davis over matters he found offensive in their respective papers. But the champion loser was surely James Anderson, a slight man who thought of himself as something of a bulldog. In 1881 he was severely beaten by a former employee, and in the following year by an officer of the local typographical union whom he had vilified repeatedly in his paper, the *Eureka Leader*. Finally, an unfortunate political accusation brought about his death in a street shooting. Nevada newspapers of Anderson's political stripe used the incident in the election campaign then in progress until it no longer served their purposes, and then the poor man was forgotten.

It shouldn't be assumed that Nevada's newspapermen had little to do but get themselves into bloodbaths and internecine law suits, though there are many more examples of that sort of thing than I've given here. In addition to the feisty lot I've just described, though, most went about their business at least competently, sometimes

colorfully, and on occasion with brilliance. A few were able to balance journalism with full-time jobs outside the trade, not a few of them in real estate. Then there was C. H. Gardner, a preacher who started newspapers in Genoa and Reno, both of them espousing prohibition. And Nicholas Hummel, who managed to combine a law practice and a career in education with newspapering in Wadsworth. And Henry Hardy Hogan, a Reno physician who found the time to start two papers that aired his own odd, generally unpopular political views.

It was indeed politics—old-fashioned, wallow-in-the-mud politics—that informed and inspired most of Nevada’s journalists. Few of them found it painful to follow the twists and turns of their chosen parties or to laud the nominee whom they had viciously maligned only the week before when he was merely a hopeful. Most were like the Ruler of the Queen’s Navee, who “always voted at my party’s call, / And... never thought of thinking for myself at all.”<sup>18</sup> A surprising number ran for office and a great many of them were elected. Those who wanted to be state printer were forced by law to declare their partisanship and run at the bottom of the state ticket, but a good many others were successful higher up on the ballot. Jewett Adams and C. C. Stevenson and William Stewart, all of whom bought newspapers to further their political careers, don’t really count. But Thomas Fitch, who was connected with several papers, and Rollin Daggett of the *Enterprise*, and George Cassidy of the *Eureka Sentinel* were U.S. representatives, and Daggett went on to become minister to Hawaii. John Dormer of the *Esmeralda Herald* in Aurora became secretary of state, and at the end of the century Sam Davis of the *Carson Appeal* was elected to the office of state controller. And more than a few served in the legislature; one of them,

Henry Mighels of the *Appeal*, brought about lasting changes in the printing scene when, as speaker of the assembly, he saw to it that the office of state printer—an office he had held himself—was abolished.

My purpose in discussing these largely unknown men, however briefly, is not to suggest that journalists with widely recognized names have received too much attention. They haven’t. Every recoverable word that Mark Twain wrote during his Nevada and western years has been published and republished, but interpretation of those words is uncommon and too often shallow. It is a commonplace to insist that Dan De Quille, during those same years, was a much better writer than Twain, but the assertion is infrequently backed by believable evidence. The hoped-for revelation that Alf Doten would be shown by publication of his massive diaries to be an incisive chronicler of nineteenth-century Nevada has been replaced by the realization that the endless burlblings of a conscientious drunk are not always the stuff that history is made on.<sup>19</sup> These people—and Daggett and Fitch and Hart, too, and Cassidy and Townsend and Mighels and others—were important to the growth and development of newspapers and newspapering in this state. But I want to suggest that Dr. Hogan and Reverend Gardner and lawyer Hummel and printer Sutherland, by creating a sound and stable, if unimaginative base, contributed as much. And so did the other printers and pressmen who were responsible for producing the newspapers and job work—some of them not so anonymous that they can’t be studied, though not mentioned here by name. The story of Nevada journalism’s formative years hasn’t had the attention it should have had. And it’s time.

## NOTES

1. Examples of job work done at the office are pasted several layers thick on the shop walls. The building has been owned by Eureka County since 1974; it was dedicated as a museum in June of 1982.

2. Robert D. Armstrong, *Nevada Printing History: A Bibliography of Imprints & Publications, 1858-1880* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981), p. 29-30.

3. Lucius Beebe, *Comstock Commotion: the Story of the Territorial Enterprise and Virginia City News* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 3; Armstrong, *ibid.*

4. Virginia City *Territorial Enterprise*, June 7, 1887.

5. The issue no longer exists, but a facsimile appears in Myron Angel, *History of Nevada* (Oakland: Thompson & West, 1881), p. 69-72, and was used in a prospectus for the book by the publisher's salesmen.

6. Armstrong, p. 31-32.

7. Records of the U.S. Department of State, Series of Letters of Application and Recommendation for Appointment to Federal Office, Record Group 59, in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

8. Armstrong, p. 38-39.

9. A circular containing regulations that secretaries must follow was issued on October 10, 1855, by the First Comptroller of the U.S. Treasury; the text appears as Appendix A in Armstrong, p. 381-382.

10. Records of Accounting Officers of the U.S. Treasury Department, Record Group 217, in the National Archives.

11. Richard E. Lingenfelter and Karen Rix Gash, *The Newspapers of Nevada: A History and Bibliography, 1854-1979* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1984), p. 41.

12. Fred H. Hart, *The Sazerac Lying Club: A Nevada Book* (San Francisco: Henry Keller & Co., 1878). Hart used the pseudonym Toby Green for his generally factual but occasionally quite fanciful legislative reporting.

13. Beebe, p. 111, claims that the *Territorial Enterprise* owned a Linotype in 1894, but Robert F. Karolevitz, *Newspapering in the Old West: A Pictorial History of Journalism and Printing on the Frontier* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1965), p. 23, cites the *Gazette*, using information supplied by the Mergenthaler Linotype Company.

14. Angel, p. 292.

15. An excellent discussion of various means of supplying power to printing presses is Rollo G. Silver, "The Power of the Press: Hand, Horse, Water, and Steam," *Printing History*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1983, p. 5-16.

16. Reno *Gazette*, July 12, 18, 1882; Virginia City *Footlight*, July 20, 1882; Reno *Nevada State Journal*, August 26, 1882.

17. Armstrong, p. 322.

18. W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Act I.

19. Alfred Doten, *The Journals...1849-1903* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), 3 vols.





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## NEVADA NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING: THE DAILIES

*Robert E. Blesse: Ev Landers is managing editor of the Reno Gazette-Journal. He came to Reno in late 1977 and joined the Nevada State Journal after a long career in journalism that included publishing a group of eight weekly newspapers in New York, and also reporting and editing stints in several metro dailies. Ev is a recipient of numerous reporting awards and was twice the recipient of the Distinguished State Government Reporting Award in New York. He worked primarily in investigations of organized crime, union racketeering, and political corruption. Ev is a former U.S. Navy officer who served in Korea and other areas of the Far East, and he will be speaking to you today on daily newspaper publishing in Nevada. [Applause]*

Ev Landers: This is one of the first places I've been where they clap for you before you speak. I hope I can live up to your expectations. I'm certainly glad that I heard Bob Armstrong's speech before I got up here this morning, because I was ready to tell you how far we had come since the good old days

of journalism, but frankly, I'm having some second thoughts about just where we are. There have been some changes, but not the radical changes that people seem to find in the images of newspapers; certainly, what you see today on your doorstep is far different than the old papers that are enclosed under glass over there on exhibit, but the fundamentals of gathering news and of writing it and of trying to find an audience for your work have not changed at all.

And while I'm on the subject, we can wash away any of the pompousness of the newspaper business: I'm reminded that we are the only business that spends multi-millions of dollars on its presses, and then turns the product over to a nine-year-old child who throws it in your bushes every morning. So, if you've got any notions about the intellectual superiority of newspaper people, you can now brush them aside. [laughter]

I've spent all my life in newspapers. It isn't that I never did anything else, but it seems that way on some days. I grew up in a family of newspaper people and lawyers, which

always put me in the middle of a debate, which probably is going on somewhere up there right now, and hopefully it will never end. We are the subjects of intense scrutiny by people like yourselves and others who witness our products every day, and frankly, being under the microscope gets a little wearying at times, because you're constantly being nitpicked to death. If you were in a job where someone was looking over your shoulder, it wouldn't be so bad with just one person doing it, but with thousands doing it, it gets a little hairy on some days. You need a lot of patience, and you need to be willing to listen to people. You should be a good listener if you have any ambitions of working in this field.

I think, too, that you will find that among the changes taking place that are of high impact is the way that newspapers are being produced. I started out in a weekly newspaper where you could smell the lead cooking in the back shop, and I still have a lot of fond memories of that time. Today there are three newspapers that drop into this community by satellite. They are sent across the country, and they are printed in the West, but they started out in the East, and the principal means of transmission is satellite. It has a kind of miraculous tone to it, but when you talk to the people who do it every day, it's not that big a deal. It's just more of the high technology that newspapers are using.

You see a lot more color in newspapers today, because through some intellectual wisdom again we discovered that people see in color. Now, *that* was something! It sort of dawned on us one day, as we were doing things in black and white, that this is not the real world, so maybe we should try to do something different, and we did, and people seemed to like it because it's real. It has a great sense of reality that people need. Not that black and white is gone: you are going

to have black and white newspapers for a long time—mainly because the cost of the technology permits some papers to have it and others only to wish for it—but I think that as time goes on you're going to see more color, because it's what people want.

Bob Armstrong was talking in some ways about a golden age, if you choose to characterize it in that way. (I'm not so sure that's the way to do it, because that implies a great deal of wisdom and understanding.) Many, many journalists were very arrogant and very uncaring about the readers of their newspapers. They just didn't care. They were in it to gain personal esteem, to advocate a point of view, to carry forth a political philosophy that they deeply believed in and wanted you to believe in at the cost of not giving you a truthful rendition of events. Yes, there were a lot of lies in those old newspapers. Some of them were kind of fun lies—just tall stories; tales well told. Others were the machinations of people who would subvert the truth of a news story in favor of a point of view that, while not being true, tended to support their point of view. That may still be a thing that is being done. I'm not so sure that all newspapers are that truthful. Facts can be bent; situations can be interpreted in various ways to give you a point of view. I think today you have to be a very cautious consumer of information. A lot of the understanding of how it's done is not complex to the point where you can't weed your way through it, but when you read a magazine, read a newspaper story, I think that you should read it carefully to make sure that it's truthful, that it's accurate, that it's precise, that it's fair; and if it's not, then you should yell at someone like myself or anyone else you can find to try to correct it, because some of it might be just a plain old mistake. Someone screwed up, and that's the way it is.

Some of it, however, could be deliberate. And sometimes the smaller the community, the more the possibility of that happening, because in the small communities the independence of newspapers is intruded upon by economic reality. You go to a small town where there are seven or eight large advertisers that truly support the economic prosperity of a newspaper, and when those folks don't like something, sometimes they will try to exact economic retribution from the editors or the publishers of the newspaper. That takes the form of "I'm pulling my ad out of your newspaper if you don't do the things that I like."

Now, many of you would find a sense of unfairness in that—maybe even un-Americanism—but still it happens, and when the editor or publisher is faced with the loss of the only full-page food ad in the paper, sometimes he caves in. Then you are robbed of the information that you need to make intelligent decisions about government or the local economy, or the local school district, or all the other subjects that impact your lives on a daily basis. So, the opportunity for that does exist. It's here. It's happening, and when the papers get larger and they get to a point where they don't have to depend on such a small group of advertisers, then maybe they can afford to live up to the mottos that they emblazon on their pages, saying, "Trust At All Costs," and all that. Those are only words until someone does something about them. And their mottos don't really mean much unless you can demonstrate that you're willing to live up to them.

So in the smaller communities—and especially in a state like this where there are numerous small communities and many small newspapers—the life of the local editor is not always as serene as one might think. There are a lot of battles going on, some of

them quietly fought in the back rooms of large corporations, with people who want to get their way with local government and who don't want things reported. There are a lot of folks out there who don't want things in the press. They don't like it. It invades their privacy. We are not the people who come to greet you at the most pleasant moments of your life. That's why people don't care for newspapers.

It's always when your house has burned down, and here's the reporter with a microphone saying the most stupid question of all: "How do you feel now that your house has burned down?" [laughter] Those are the inanities that drive the public crazy, and they probably should, because, at that point in time, we are not being very thoughtful or sensitive or smart about how we handle the public. And, I think, we're paying a lot more attention to that today, a lot more attention. A lot more than they did when Mark Twain and Dan De Quille were running around telling tall tales.

We can't do that today in such large measure, perhaps because of a thing called "lawsuits." [laughter] And we get a lot of lawsuits. This is a society that loves to sue each other. It doesn't cost much if you can get into the right circumstances, and there is considerable gain if you get into a situation where the publication is willing to settle because they don't want to go through all the agony of a trial. People will use that as a battering ram against publications. Libel has become a problem that it wasn't in the days of the frontier, when, if you thought the editor had libeled you, you got out your .45, went down, and solved your problem, which I think, is a lot better way than how they're doing it now. [laughter] At least you had a chance to defend yourself in some righteous fashion. Now you have to listen to a lot of

lawyers rake you over the coals. [laughter] Those are some of the changes and they are the kinds of things that stories are made of.

There are only three large daily newspapers in the entire state. There used to be four, but everyone knew that the [*Nevada State Journal*] and the [*Reno Evening Gazette*] were the same newspaper, except to the people who were publishing it. You know—they wanted to entertain you with that fiction! [laughter] Fortunately, they realized that it was no longer possible to maintain that, and they pulled them together into one newspaper, which is generally better. It's like anything where you can pull all your resources together and focus them in one area. You can always do a better job.

With one paper in Reno and two in Las Vegas, you have the metro press of Nevada, and then you begin moving out into the smaller communities, and, from looking at the papers around the state, I've found them to be of rather high quality. I visited a lot of these places, and I've looked at these papers from time to time, and I've met the editors and the people who own them. I would say that, by and large, this state has more than its share of well-edited and well-reported newspapers.

Then there is also the fact that you have one of the old pioneers of personal journalism still rambling around in Las Vegas, and you knew who that is—that's Hank Greenspun. Hank is a very good friend, and I have a lot of admiration for him; however, I don't agree with his brand of journalism, because it's not my cup of tea, but it's something to behold when you see in action. [laughter] After William Loeb passed away...I think Hank is probably the only one left who still operates on that level, and I hope he does it for another hundred years, because I think that it's the kind of journalism which is colorful,

*sometimes* accurate [laughter], but always entertaining, and there is a place for it.

There is a place for it in history, and there is a place for it now. You find it more in the columnists now. The columnists in many ways have taken over the editorial color of newspapers. It's the Ellen Goodmans and the Jack Andersons, and the David Grovers, and the Mike Roykos, and on and on and on—the people who are feeding a great and almost desperate public need to find other people's opinions. Most of us are involved in some kind of opinion all the time. We don't get up every day measuring our statements very carefully about what we think about this and that. We're all rendering opinion. Even "Have a nice day" might be an opinion; you know it's not always the way it's going to turn out.

So in that sense we might have lost a lot. We might have gone back a few steps. I wish there were more of that type of person around who was willing to go on the line, willing to have a tough opinion and stick with it—especially in a place like Reno, where there are polarized opinions. When that happens in the press, sparks fly, things happen, dialogues begin. So it's a method of becoming what a local newspaper really should be in a philosophical sense, which is an instrument of community understanding. And in that process we should be debating each other; we should be asking each other questions; we should be taking positions, and all the things that contribute to a meaningful dialogue—not just railing at each other, but sifting out the things that we can agree on and finding a plane where we can find a movement toward progress. We should be always pointing in that direction.

There are a lot of stories that come up about old newspapers, and I'm sort of wandering here a little bit. I'm on the theme

of how things have changed or maybe how they haven't changed.

When I first came here I found a copy of the *Gold Hill News*, which was not too old. It was only a few months old, and apparently a resurrected version of the *Gold Hill News*, and they [the publishers] decided that summertime was the time when people went on vacation. And so *they* did, and in their parting issue they said, "We're going to take a few months off, so don't you guys do nothing while we're gone." [laughter] And I thought that was a wonderful anecdote about how newspapers still continue to function in the old way.

One thing that hasn't changed, though, and I hope never does, is the dedication of people in the newspaper business to the calling that they have. Some people have called it a priesthood, but that's much too lofty for what we are doing here. And, besides that, I don't want to hear confessions this morning [laughter] if you don't mind. So, if you can think of it in that way, it is a kind of profession and a trade all mixed up in one jar, because part of it dwells in the old apprenticeship system. A lot of journalism is passed on from one generation to another, from one editor to another—things that are not taught in the schools, because the schools are not meant to teach those things. A lot of it has to do with human relations and how you deal with people and how you interrelate with the people that you have to use as your news sources.

Then there is the trade school aspect of it, which involves the technical: finding out how pages are put together; learning computer systems, which now dominate most newsrooms and have taken the place of the typewriter and the linotype and all the other machines—wonderful machines, by the way—

that were the power sources of newspapers. Now they are tied up in these huge computers and VDTs—wonderful things that you can do at high speed to get a better product in your bushes every morning. And, you know, until we cure that one...all our efforts are going to be in vain. [laughter] We are moving on those roads and trying to bring you a product that is going to be more meaningful.

What does a product do? What it does it do to life? What are we supposed to be doing? Bob Armstrong mentioned briefly that the newspaper has many roles. It brings you the news of government; it shocks the community; it brightens the lives of some people with feature stories that are uplifting. It does a lot of different things. But then as you begin to leaf through it, you come cross the concept of the modern-day newspaper which serves a multitude of purposes.

Look in the classified section of a local newspaper—any local newspaper—and you'll see the mirror image of the local community. That's where it is, because, somehow, in the things that people are buying or selling or trading or trying to find, you'll find some information, some vital information, about what a little town is about or what a large city is about. You'll find the prices of homes; you'll find that people are selling some of the treasured things of their lives, which gives you some indication about what the local economy might be like. You'll find people that are searching for love or companionship in the personal columns—dozens of ads. You'll find many, many things that will give you insights into what makes a city or town tick.

And then you could move over to another page, and you'll find the comics and what's playing at the movies, what's on television, so it's kind of a guide to daily life. The more newspapers modernize, the more they keep

coming back to that theme that we have to be more receptive, more understanding of the things that people need, and not the thing that we want to tell you, which is the way that the old newspaper editors operated. I think the modern-day newspaper is tuning into wide needs through polls and through surveys to find out what makes their individual communities tick and how they can better serve those needs. They don't always hit the mark, but they are getting better at it as time goes on, and that's happening here in Nevada, and it's happening across the country.

But I hope that no matter how sophisticated we get (if that's a good term) or how bright we get about understanding what your needs are, I would certainly hope that we never lose the flavor of the old-time newspapers that Bob Armstrong talked about. I think that spirit—that willingness to enrage and engage, as they say—is the bottom line. If you lose that, if that disappears into some kind of homogenized product being put out by homogenized editors and homogenized reporters—you're going to be bored to death. I was reading this morning it would be like a priest taking a confession from nuns, which was likened to being stoned to death with popcorn. [laughter] I found that in the newspaper, too. [laughter]

Now I'd like to open the floor up to some questions about newspaper operations or what we do or how we do it. I'll be glad to try to answer them.

*Audience: In reading the editorial columns in the Gazette-Journal, I wonder—are those decisions made by a committee? Whose views are those?*

Landers: First of all, they are not corporate view, and never have been, and I hope they will never be. The newspapers that are part of a group operate on an individual basis within

their own communities. Yet, the editorials are a product of the thinking of the members of the editorial board. There are five people on that board. We debate the various things that we want to have some kind of opinion on, and then the consensus of that group is written by two principal writers. Whether they agree with it or not is not the issue. We try to come out of there with a consensus, and that is why they are not signed, because they are not necessarily the views of the person who writes them.

Often we will bring in community groups or individuals to discuss an issue that we can't agree on or that we need more information on. We will talk to focus groups of people—whether they are doctors, lawyers, or people in politics or government—and try to gain more insight and do some research in those areas before we have an opinion on something. It's not something where we shoot from the hip, and not something that we get emotionally involved in, although emotional arguments are made when the issues are of that nature. That's why they are not signed, but there are no corporate views. There's no 1984 overview kind of a thing. They're just the views of people who live and work in the Reno area.

*Why is there so little news from around the state in the paper? We have just this small area, and it seems that when something big happens in Las Vegas, it has to be terribly important. Even when the legislature meets, our people don't understand a thing that happens.*

Well, that's certainly a comment on the people who cover the legislature for us. I would say that you have an impression of the newspaper, and I don't know what it's being judged on. It's kind of a hypothetical question, in a sense, and I probably can only give you a

hypothetical answer. My usual answer to this question (and I get this question a lot when I go out to speak) is that you should judge the newspaper over a longer period of time. Often people will say, "Well, I didn't see that in the newspaper."

Well, sometimes it was there and they didn't see it, or sometimes they had seen it and it's gone from their memory. I think that in terms of state coverage you're quite right. We could do a lot more in that area, and we probably will in the future. In terms of the legislature, I would say that we cover that.

*What I said is the background of our knowledge of the state is so poor that we're vague as to what is going on when it is brought out.*

It is brought out. I think that you're talking probably more about continuity of coverage, and it's quite true. We could do a lot more in that area, and certainly try.

*Quite often, when you have something that is considered a major story, we find that you have two and sometimes three reporters with a byline repeating that same story on the same page—the same paragraph sometimes—both appearing within different articles. And you read one, and you're satisfied in reading this, thinking you're getting more information, but it's the same information, in the same paper, on the same page. I'm just wondering why this should occur.*

When that happens—when you find that there is a duplication in what we call a package of stories—then some editor has not done his job. We work to reduce the overlap. There will always be some overlap when you're attempting to approach a subject from two or three different angles. Obviously, in the case you're citing, they didn't achieve that goal, but

they are meant to amplify points in the main story that were not elaborated on and need to be elaborated on. In the interests of not giving a reader a sixty-inch story to read, we break them up into smaller segments, because we know that people tire of reading that much in one story. But in the case that you cited, we didn't our job well.

*Well, excuse me, but it's more than one case.*  
[laughter]

Then we haven't done our job in more than one case.... [laughter]

*I'll send you some examples.*

I wish you would, because it's really hard to talk about a specific thing. I might argue about the overlap if I could see the specific instance.

*You've forgotten one thing about your newspaper on the beneficial side: it's still the greatest piece of ignition to start a fireplace fire....* [laughter]

Well, we're going to work on that.  
[laughter]

*One of the things that I see in the newspaper that I'm curious about is there seems to be an awful lot of reporters making fun of people, implying that their views are silly. That tends to happen frequently. I think it's distressing for the reader to read that which makes you feel alienated within the community.*

That is a case of just poor reporting, unless there is a vehicle that has been created...say, it's being done within a column where it's understood that this is the personal opinion of the person who is writing it.... But if it's done in a way that is overly critical or makes fun

of someone or is somehow derogatory, then I'd call that mighty, mighty poor reporting. I don't think that should be tolerated, and I would do something about it if I saw it. I haven't seen that coming up. Maybe it's something that I've missed along with the use of the paper in the fireplace. I think that probably it does occur, and it has to be viewed within the context. Making fun of something may be an arbitrary view on your point. It may not be perceived that way generally. Usually if you are the person who is involved, maybe you see it that way, but others may not; but I think it is something that has to be watched.

*I can give you one specific example, and it was an editorial. The editorial said that Nevadans were stupid. Well, you know, I was a little offended.*

I don't know what the context was, but if the writing was in the editorial, which you have to understand is not a place where you're not going to find extreme fairness, you're going to find someone's opinion in there. If that writer felt that in that instance the people were behaving stupidly, then so be it. That's what makes it go around, you know. If indeed they were, he should be able to demonstrate it—not just to say that someone is stupid, but to demonstrate why he or she feels that way. Apparently that was not done in the instance that you are now discussing, or did they elaborate on their feelings?

*Oh, they elaborated, but the first few sentences were enough to make me not want to read the article.*

Well, of course. Paranoia is a problem that we all share, and [laughter] it's a feeling like when you go to the football game, you think

the people in the huddle may be talking about you. [laughter] That is the kind of problem that the editorial writer really doesn't think about. He doesn't care who he offends or who he praises; he's merely expressing a point of view. I think along the way there might be a few bruised egos or hurt feelings, but I don't think it's anything personal.

*I don't believe it! [laughter]*

*I've been a little curious as to whether the rules of newspapering or publishing have changed so much that you no longer try to adhere to, say, 75 percent editorial, 25 percent editorial, or 75 percent advertising.*

You have to look at it this way: at least from my point of view, the newspaper—without sounding arrogant—is not a public utility. It's a business; and if the local publisher decided after examining his costs—as any businessman does—that he needs to produce 75 percent of his space in advertising and 25 percent in news, then that's his formula for staying in business and making a reasonable profit. I don't think that there's any particular rule, because the larger the newspaper, the more you can put in it without sacrificing what they call the news hole, or the portion of the paper that is used for news. For example, in the Reno papers we usually will run about 60/40. Some days it might be over that; some days it might be under that; but you have to look at the total newspaper. What the editor counts as a news hole, you might not perceive as that. The television listings are counted as news. The comics are counted as news. There is no precise formula. There was once a 60/40 formula. I've seen that moved around a lot over the years because of economics, but I'd say that somewhere in that range is probably what we're talking about. Some papers have gone to 50/50.



*You're talking about a page where you have local news on one page, and you have an eight-page section. You'd wind up with one page of news stories.*

You should look at the total product. Local news is found in sports; local news is found in other sections of the newspaper. So when you're counting all that up, you have to use all that space that you have devoted to news of local interest. When we say "local news page," it doesn't mean that is the only place in the paper where you are liable to find local news. It's an economic decision on the part of the newspaper. I think you have to be careful that you don't go too far, because if you lose the readers it's equally bad on you economically.

*There seems to be a problem, I think, that is becoming epidemic in the press. I don't know, maybe you don't care about it, but you see it in the newspapers, television, radio. You have a singular subject, and it takes a plural verb. It doesn't seem to matter whether the subject is singular to some of these writers. If the nearest noun is plural they go to a plural verb. Are there any watchdogs any more?*

Oh, sure there are watchdogs. They probably are sleeping occasionally. [laughter] As you have well pointed out, I don't know of any cure for that except to be watchful. I do think that people care about using the English language correctly, but there are occasional problems with subject/verb agreement and with other things, mind you. Just simple spellings sometimes get to be a problem, so if you're trying to get me to give you an answer to that, I'm not going to do it. [laughter] But I think that to answer your one question...yes, there are people who care, and, yes, there are people who watch for it; but we have to do a lot better in working out those kinds of problems.

*Yes, I think so.*

*I think we should be thankful for what some of the newspapers (including the Gazette-Journal) have done through their editorials and their articles on making issues of non-issues—for example, the library resources of the state. I feel that one reason we got it out on the side of the community at large and statewide is because the media is now dealing with an important part of the community, and basically that's a very good thing to have, especially when the legislators pay attention to the media. This is a very positive point that I am excited about in hopes that the media and newspapers will keep that attention.*

Well, I'd like to thank you all for having me here today, and I hope I answered most of your questions to your satisfaction. And if I didn't, my office is always open and we can carry it on further.



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## NEVADA NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING: THE WEEKLIES

*Robert E. Blesse: Tom Wixon came to Nevada in 1961, graduated from Reno High School and later graduated from the UNR School of Journalism. While at UNR he was the editor of the student newspaper, the Sagebrush, and was honored as the journalism department's outstanding senior when he graduated.*

*Since entering the newspaper world, Mr. Wixon has held jobs in both the editorial and business sides. He started at the Nevada Appeal and, after a year as a general assignment reporter there, covering county government, he went to work for a weekly paper, the Carson Review, which is now defunct. In the year he spent there he wore many hats, alternating as editor, reporter, photographer, paste-up artist and sports writer. In 1973 Wixon went to work for the Record-Courier, a small weekly in Gardnerville, as editor. Two years later he was made general manager and became responsible for the advertising and business functions of the newspaper. He also guided its editorial department during those early years.*

*Since 1976 the Record-Courier has won more awards from the Nevada State*

*Press Association than any other Nevada newspaper—daily or weekly. Last month the NSPA awarded the Record-Courier eight first-place awards for excellence, including all the top awards: general excellence, community service, and freedom of the press. The Record-Courier has in the past ten years grown from a circulation of 1,800 to more than 4,800. It has gone from a ten-page, single-section newspaper to one that averages more than sixty pages a week, and is printed in at least four sections, and usually contains four to eight advertising inserts.*

*Its staff has grown from the four when Wixon started twelve years ago, to nearly thirty—about half of its thirty employees work full-time. The newspaper has recently begun to computerize its editorial operation after years of using computerized typesetting equipment in the production department.*

*Tom Wixon: I would rather listen to Ev Landers defend the policy at the Reno Gazette-Journal for another hour, and I'd be happy to sit down and allow him the opportunity to*

do that. [laughter] But since I've come all this way, let me share a story with you:

Two small boys were playing outside, and one of them ran in and approached his mother. "Mommy," he said, "where did I come from?" His mother sighed, broke out in a cold sweat and then decided to go ahead and make the most of the moment, so she sat down, and beginning with the birds and bees, she told little Johnny the whole story. Johnny's eyes got bigger and bigger. When she finished, he jumped up and said, "Boy, wait till I tell David. He thinks he came from Los Angeles." [laughter]

That story demonstrates how important it is to understand the question before you try to provide any answers. And I'm feeling a little bit like Johnny's mother this morning, because I have been invited here to give you some answers about publishing weekly newspapers, and I'm not sure I understand the question. So, I'm going to assign those of you here in the front row to listen very carefully. If I get too technical, just open your eyes as big as you can and I'll know I've gone too far.

First, a little history about the *Record-Courier*. It's really a hybrid newspaper. It was begun on July 16, 1880, when someone began to publish the *Genoa Courier* in Genoa, Nevada. Eighteen years later, in 1898, the *Gardnerville Record* was published for the first time and reflected the fact that there was a shift in the market to Gardnerville. Just a few years later, 1902, the *Weekly Courier* moved its operation, its plant and its spring presses to Gardnerville, using an ox cart to move a fairly new building which we're still housed in. It set up shop in Gardnerville, still using the name *Weekly Courier*.

So, in 1902, there were two newspapers in Gardnerville, Nevada. Well, that could not last long economically, and it did not. In 1904 a mysterious fire destroyed the *Gardnerville*

*Record*. The *Gardnerville Record* had more subscribers than the *Genoa Courier*, so they made a deal, and the paper became the *Record-Courier*. Bert Selkirk came along that same year, in 1904, an itinerant printer from California looking for someplace to land, and he secured a job with the *Record-Courier*, and four years later became its owner. Bert Selkirk spent forty years at the *Record-Courier*. He became something of an institution in the community and is probably the epitome of the country editor-publisher of which there are so many in this country. Bert Selkirk died in the 1950s, and a local historian said this about him, "He was a wonderful man. He knew everybody in town personally, and that's what makes a newspaper."

Now, that doesn't seem like very much of a eulogy, I suppose, but he was found to have been a wonderful man. More than any of us likes to admit, ego plays a large role in why a lot of us get into this business. I'm sure he was quite happy to learn that people thought of him as a wonderful person, but the interesting part of this quote to me was that Mr. Selkirk knew everybody in town personally. That's what made his newspaper great, and I think today that is what makes weekly newspapers, community newspapers, continue to thrive in a time when almost weekly or monthly you can pick up the paper and find that somewhere like Philadelphia or New Jersey, a daily newspaper 90, 100, 150 years old has folded up shop. Weekly newspapers are thriving at a time when some daily newspapers are not.

To continue with the history, a family named Suverkrup from Reno came down to Gardnerville and bought the paper in 1944 when Bert Selkirk had a heart attack, and they owned the paper for eighteen years. John Suverkrup was a city editor at the *Gazette-Journal* at that time, and he used to commute

to Reno every night after working all day at the *Record-Courier*. When he finished his swing-shift at the *Gazette-Journal* he drove back to Gardnerville, and that must have been a long drive then—because, as you know, Reno and Gardnerville were a lot further apart then than they are now. [laughter]

The Suverkruks did that for a good many years, tired of it, and sold the paper to a Chicago businessman, who came out in 1958 and ran the paper. He commuted back and forth, and, after seven years of that, he found two pigeons in Tom Dickerson and Tony Payton, a couple of twenty-three-year-old college kids from Arizona. They thought that they would love to run a country weekly newspaper somewhere, and this one was for sale—cheap. So they grabbed it, spent five years hiding under the desk, hoping that nobody would come in and put them through the kind of a grilling that Ev Landers just got, for example.

Gardnerville was a very strange town in 1965. It was called Cousin Valley by many people, and unless you were related to somebody, you weren't anybody. [laughter] Consequently, these guys did the best they could to become a part of the community. They joined the Rotary Club, which met on Monday at the Pyrenees Basque bar and restaurant; then they joined the Chamber of Commerce, which met on Tuesday at another Basque restaurant; and the Lions Club, which met on Wednesday at still another Basque bar and restaurant. There were five service clubs; they joined all of them. They had lunch every day—two or three picon punches, a bottle of cheap red wine [laughter], and blotto for the rest of the afternoon. That takes its toll. You think the newspaper business is easy? [laughter] It's not. It lasted until 1970 when they conned a Chicago insurance magnate into coming out to Gardnerville, which is nestled serenely in the shadow of Job's Peak

and has a lot of pastureland and looks for all the world like the Swiss Alps.

Mr. Frank Griffen came out from Chicago and said to himself, "This is where I will retire, and here it is that I will sit around the potbellied stove and rap with the community leaders, the pharmacist from the local drugstore and a couple of farmers and a rancher or two, and maybe even a banker from down the street. And when we get through talking and discussing the issues of the day, I'll slip into my suede coat, light up my pipe, and hammer out some beautiful words, and everybody will pat me on the back and say, 'Well done, Frank. Good job.'"

He had a much different existence when it came to reality. He found that he worked twelve hours a day, five or six days a week; that people purchased advertising who didn't pay for it; and that every Thursday and Friday his phone rang off the hook with people complaining—either they didn't like what he had written, or they weren't happy because of what he had not. [laughter] He lasted one year and decided this was no way to retire, and he sold the newspaper to Don Woodward.

Donald L. Woodward, Jr., knew what he was getting into, because he already published a weekly newspaper, the *Sparks Tribune*. He started a little rag called the *Big Nickel*, which gave publishers fits in the sixties and seventies and took away virtually all of their classified advertising—which mirrors the community that you talked about. [laughter] Then some millionaires from California came along about five or six years ago and made him an offer he couldn't refuse, and he retired to Carmel, where he lives in a house that overlooks the ocean. [laughter]

And here I am, stuck in Gardnerville [laughter] running the newspaper for him, and that's a brief history of the *Record-Courier* and brings you up to date.

Is this too technical for you so far?  
[laughter]

Let's talk a little bit about changes. There have been a lot of them, and Mr. Landers alluded to quite a few of them. We feel the changes more severely, I think, at the weekly newspaper level, because it's a very small operation—it's a small business. The big change was from hot type to cold type. Now, don't ask me to explain that. I heard that once, and that's just a couple of buzz words that I use. I have no idea [laughter] what hot type means. I don't know what hot lead smells like [laughter], and I wouldn't know how to operate a linotype machine if my life depended on it. I haven't got the foggiest idea. I know that in 1971, when Don bought the *Record-Courier*, there was an old Goss Comet press and there were a couple of linotype machines. They even had a room—a mysterious dark, little room with a fan in it—where they used to make little lead pigs, and that has something to do with the use of hot lead in the newspaper business. I just turned forty years old, and I haven't got any idea what hot lead was about. Most of the people that work with me are in their thirties and forties, and none of them do either. So there has indeed been a revolution in the printing business in the last couple of decades. If you talk to somebody who's just slightly older than I am, they will be amazed that anybody could be in the newspaper business and not understand linotype machines and hot lead and so forth. We still have a lot of those relics in a storehouse somewhere, and we're going to open a museum one of these days with them.

When Don Woodward bought the paper in 1971, it was losing money. It wasn't supporting itself, so he took a look around, closed down the back shop, turned the switch off on the Goss press, let a couple of printers go and trained a couple of typists to

sit down in front of photo typesetting units and bang out type. They trucked it up to the *Sparks Tribune*, where they ran it through a hot wax machine and slapped it down. Just like cut-and-paste in kindergarten—ran the paper through the press, trucked it back to Gardnerville to the post office and mailed it and saved a thousand to two thousand dollars a month.

Suddenly he took a newspaper that hadn't made any money for years, and it was making a small profit. That story I tell you simply to point out to you the economics of the newspaper business. It's the economics that has brought about this revolution and this change. And nowhere has it been more pronounced than with weekly newspapers.

The *Record-Courier*, from about 1904 or maybe even earlier, used to be a four-page paper—single sheet folded in half, and then it grew to six pages. During Christmas, when the ten or fifteen major advertisers—all the advertisers in the town—would run their Christmas greetings, it would swell to eight pages, and that was the *Record-Courier* for decades and decades. In 1971 it was about the same. It grew over the next few years to ten or twelve pages. [holds up newspaper] This is this week's Sears catalog. [laughter] It's sixty-two pages, and that's sixty-two pages that we produce, and does not include, I think, seven or eight advertising inserts. In this particular issue there is also a copy of the *Carson Valley Almanac*, which we published a few months ago. There are a dozen copies, I guess, back there on the table if any of you want a guide to living in Carson Valley—that's what this purports to be. It's inside this issue of the paper because this is a big week in Gardnerville. It's Carson Valley Days, an annual celebration, and there's a lot of visitors in town, so if you buy a paper on the street for thirty-five cents this week, you get a free copy of the almanac.

We have made another change in terms of personnel. The *Record-Courier* existed for years with two to four employees. The Selkirks and the Suverkrups were husband and wife teams. It was a mom-and-pop operation, literally for decades, and mom and pop did all the work. They did the editorial work, they mailed out the bills for subscriptions, they took advertising, they ran a front office, they did whatever had to be done. They probably went in the back and got their hands dirty on production day, and then hired one or two other production people to run the presses and set up type and so forth. That was pretty much unchanged until the early seventies.

When I came to work at the *Record-Courier* in 1973 there were four people working there. That's it. I did payroll this morning before I came up here, and I signed thirty-three checks. They don't all work full-time—about sixteen or seventeen of them are full-time—but many of the others who are part-time work twenty, thirty hours a week, and they've been working twenty or thirty hours a week for, in some cases, six or seven years. So while they're not full-time, they're not temporary help either. That's one of the big changes that's occurred.

Interestingly, in all of the changes, in going from eight pages to this [refers to newspaper], you'd think these guys must be rolling in dough, right? What's interesting is that if you go back and look at the gross sales for a newspaper company, a weekly newspaper the size of this one fifteen years ago, the gross sales today are ten, twelve, fifteen times what they were then, and yet the profit hasn't gone up much, if at all. When Don Woodward bought the paper in 1971, after he'd had it for an entire year, his accountant gave him the good news that he had netted about sixteen or seventeen percent on gross sales, which sounded terrific, but it

wasn't a lot of dollars, and the reason is these changes that I've mentioned to you.

You've got bulk. It costs a lot of money to produce and distribute and mail a package like this. You've got all those people. It's a very labor-intensive business, and labor, as you know, not only has gotten very expensive, but there's been another change: you can't get people to work sixteen hours a day anymore, six days a week. I don't know why [laughter], but you just can't. When I got out of school I expected to have to go to work and do that. I thought nothing of leaving a plush job as a Twenty-one dealer at Harrah's, and for half the money going to work for the *Nevada Appeal* and working five or six days a week, ten, twelve hours a day sometimes, covering football games on the weekends and planning commission meetings until one o'clock in the morning. I thought I was supposed to do that and should be glad to get the work, but those people are all gone. Now everybody in the newspaper business is an artiste—with an *e* on the end—and can't be pushed, and the word *accountability* is not in their vocabulary. You don't dare ask an artist to account for their time. If they're not actually physically producing something, then by God they're *thinking*. [laughter] They're being creative, and that's something you don't mess with, so that's been a problem and that's why newspapers cost so much money to produce.

Another reason that we're not making money hand over fist is inserts. I'm not going to pull them out and wave them at you, but there's a whole bunch of stuff in here from Raley's and Warehouse Market and Penney's and Mervyn's. The grocery stores a few years back broke the hearts of every weekly publisher in Nevada when they made an economic decision. They could save millions of dollars by printing all of their ads someplace in California, putting

them on trucks and sending them to all the newspapers—paying them relatively pennies to insert them in their papers instead of paying them many, many dollars to compose the ads in their own shops. They wanted to do this for quality control and consistency, and also to save a lot of money.

To give you a typical example of what that meant: In 1982, the last year that we had four to ten pages a week from Raley's, we probably billed that company eighty thousand dollars. In March of 1983 I was given approximately four weeks notice that they were going to pre-printed inserts, and today we might bill Raley's for fifteen thousand dollars a year. So in one fell swoop a small weekly newspaper in western Nevada lost sixty-some thousand dollars worth of revenue overnight, just like that—twelve, thirteen, fourteen percent of our gross revenues for the year—a sum that when Don Woodward bought the newspaper in 1971 was a year's gross. Think of that! It had a staggering effect on the newspaper. It cost us several employees, and it took us about a year-and-a-half or two years to get back on our feet. We got back on our feet only because Carson Valley is the boom area of Nevada. It's growing so fast that sheer momentum, and brilliant management, I should add [laughter], brought us back to healthy posture. But, boy it was scary. It was frightening, and that's the way the weekly newspaper business is. You're really close to the economic decisions of your customers.

Another change: graphics, color photo reproduction. We're using color photos. We can't use them every day. We can't afford to. It costs us a lot of money to put color photographs on the front page of the *Record-Courier*. We don't do it often. Here's one. [refers to newspaper] If you get a chance to look through this, you'll see some very, very fine graphics, and you'll see some excellent black-and-white photos, eight or ten full-color

pictures, lots of feature stories, some full-color ads—lots of advertising. This is a product that could not have been done technically not too many years ago, and probably could not have been done at all even now if it weren't for a lot of changes that we've made in our attitude toward the publishing business.

I was reading some excerpts from a bunch of weekly newspaper publishers in California recently who wrote about why their papers are successful. In almost every one of them the word *quality* kept coming up. They were asked, "How do you compete with daily newspapers?" And their answer was, "We don't. We cover our community. We do it as well as we can. We know nobody else is going to, and we do it with quality." So while I'm not telling you that weekly newspapers in Nevada—even this one—is a top quality printed product week after week after week, the quality is certainly better than it was.

Bob Blesse asked me to talk a little bit about how weekly newspaper publishing differs from daily publishing. I could talk all day about that, but I'm going to limit my remarks to just three or four:

We practice what I call "scrapbook journalism." That means everything we print in this newspaper is probably going to end up in somebody's scrapbook, and we know that. Let me give you an example. Somebody got married last Sunday—Smith married Jones—and this information is reported to the newspaper. Our story reads that yes, in fact, Smith did marry Jones, and it's mentioned several times throughout the story. Unfortunately, the headline has Smith marrying Davis. [laughter] Now that happens sometimes because of human error. In a typical daily newspaper, what would happen is the next day there would be a little blurb about this in small boldface that says, "Correction," and underneath it would be the words: "In a



story that ran yesterday, we inadvertently ran the wrong headline...tada, tada, tada.... Smith actually married Jones, as our story makes clear. We regret the error.”

Now try to visualize the Smith’s scrapbook that they’re going to keep for fifty or sixty years. What we would do, and have done in a case like that, is we simply put the correct headline on the story, and run it again the next week. We don’t put an editor’s note on it that says, “We screwed up this last time, so here it is for real.” We just simply run it, allowing somebody to clip it out and put it in their scrapbook, and that’s why we call it scrapbook journalism.

The Yerington weekly, a fine weekly newspaper in Yerington called the *Mason Valley News*, has a very unique flag or slogan. The flag, of course, as most of you know, is that part of the newspaper right here that tells you what the name of it is, and usually there’s a slogan. Ours is The Voice of Douglas County. The one in Yerington says, “The Only Newspaper in the World That Gives a Damn About Yerington.” [laughter] It’s said that for about forty years, and it *is*. [laughter] That the success of weekly newspapers, community newspapers, because they care about the community in which they work, and nobody else does.

We carry things in the *Record-Courier* that nobody else is going to run because they’re not practicing scrapbook journalism. The *Gazette-Journal* is not going to carry two percent of what we find to be news week after week after week. Neither is the *Nevada Appeal*, which is just fifteen miles away, although they’ll carry more Douglas County news than the *Gazette-Journal* does. That’s one of the things that makes us different from daily newspapers.

Another is that we have a special proximity to our readers. We’re not operating out of any

ivory tower at all. When you write something in a weekly newspaper, you’re going to walk down the street the next day and run into four or five people who were affected by that story. They’re going to have something to say to you. Or you’re going to go out and have coffee in the morning at the local coffee shop, and they will *descend* on you and have something good or bad to say.

Normally, when the paper comes out on Thursday, about the worst thing that happens is somebody calls up and says, “You’ve got the wrong phone number in my classified ad.” But this Thursday was just incredible. It was amazing. The phone rang off the hook, so I thought I’d share with you some of the things that happened, so you can get the flavor of publishing in a small town. A real estate office was building a new building, and I had a beautiful artist’s rendering. It’s a very unique, unusual kind of building, and we ran a story. In the same issue there’s a big sewer project. Well, somebody put the sewer headline on the real estate building. [laughter] This is my biggest advertiser, naturally, but she didn’t call, and I didn’t notice it until late in the morning. When I finally called her I thought she was probably really mad. She was very, very sweet for about ten, fifteen seconds, and then in words dripping with ice she said, “We’re not a sewer over here.” [laughter] I felt really bad about it and promised her we would correct it and hung up.

Then the phone rang again. It seems that in the story we had written about the ownership of the property and some adjacent parcels. Now, there’s a big hotel-casino on one of those parcels. If you read the story just right, that is if you read what it says—let’s be honest, we screwed up—[laughter] it implies that the property under which the Carson Valley Inn sits still belongs to these other people, when the truth is that they

owned it once and they had sold it. That was not clear in the story. Little did I know that these two people didn't speak to each other. Consequently, the manager of the inn called to tell me that his owners were furious. The implications had terrible ramifications for all of their futures, and nothing that we could do could possibly satisfy them, and there was some talk about pulling their advertising. You know all of that, all the things that Ev Landers alluded to. We put that fire out and thought, "Well, we're going to be OK."

And then the phone rang again, and it was another real estate broker who was in competition with the one that I mentioned. They used to work together, and they don't like each other very much, and there's a lot of competition between the two of them. Consequently, she was incensed over the fact that in a business column that I write every week I had quoted the other woman's reaction to Reagan's tax reform proposal, and had not bothered to call her. I had to explain that that's the way the newspaper business works. You don't always call everybody in town when you want an opinion. You pick one real estate person, one banker, et cetera, and I just happened to pick this one at random. You're close to your work. [laughter]

And finally two other differences: one is, we don't cover the world. We cover our tiny little corner of it like the *Mason Valley News* does. The last one is that we don't print our paper in our shop, and this is a pretty radical change. Bert Selkirk, the itinerant printer who came to Gardnerville some years ago, probably is rolling over in his grave at this development, because newspapers used to be published by people with ink in their veins. They were printers first, and they disseminated information because it was a way to make a buck. Nowadays at many, many weekly newspapers they don't bother running

the paper through the press, and again the reason is economics.

Presses are so fast today that we can do this whole thing [displays paper]...in about three hours of press time. I'd have to spend half a million dollars for machinery, a quarter of a million dollars for a building, hire a couple of guys to stand around and run the press three hours a week, and be faced with the dilemma of what do I do the other thirty-seven hours a week. It would cost me a fortune. Within an hour's drive of the *Record-Courier* there are six Webb offset presses—each of them with time to sell. When we went out to bid the last time we got four bids, and then two other people called me up afterwards and asked if it was too late to bid. So there's no reason to have a press. We never will have a press as long as we remain a weekly newspaper. That's a radical change from the daily publishing world.

What about the future? Carson Valley is growing very, very rapidly. The university business department last year issued a study which contained an interesting graph that showed that somewhere around 1993, 1994 or 1995 the population of Carson Valley, Douglas County, where we live—and I'm not talking about the Lake Tahoe Douglas County; I'm talking about the valley portion—the population of our region will meet and surpass that of Carson City. We will become the third population center in Nevada, and that poses a problem for us, a dilemma. It's what we like to call the "weekly/ daily dilemma." Do we remain a weekly, or do we go daily? Not a day goes by—I'm not kidding—every day virtually somebody comes in my office and says, "When are you going to publish two, three, four, five times a week?"

We have the dilemma of what do we do with a weekly newspaper that's successful, that's profitable, that is very broadly read in its community, and really has loyal readership.

What do we do with it? Because do we want to take a strong weekly newspaper and turn it into a weak daily newspaper? I haven't seen very many five-thousand-circulation daily newspapers that were any good. Economics again. It costs a lot of money to publish every day. But the legend goes if you don't do that you're going to get swept behind, you're going to get caught up in the growth, and somebody's going to come in and take your place. I don't know how true that is, but it's certainly something that we worry about from time to time. It's a dilemma, and we don't have an answer yet. We're thinking about it, and that's what I tell people when they say, "When are you going to...?" And we say, "We're thinking about it." Indeed, we are.

Computers and high-tech equipment is the rest of the future, I guess. You heard Bob Blesse say that we were computerizing our operation. The back shop has been computerized for more than a decade, and we just installed computers on the desks of all the editorial people just a couple of days ago. I'm waiting for them all to come back to work now. [laughter] I thought they'd be delighted to get rid of those 1912 Royal Standards, and some of them were.

I don't have anything else to say to you, because I'm sure out of time, and I would entertain some questions if you have any. I don't know whether you do or not.

*Audience: How many other weeklies in Nevada are using presses...?*

I don't have a count for you. There are only about twenty weekly newspapers in Nevada, and only about half of them resemble what you might call a newspaper. The other half tend to be four-page broadsheets that are being published from afar in order to pick up the legals that the county has to run by law. I

don't know why some of them are in existence. I don't have an answer for you, but I know that in Nevada there are probably more weekly newspapers that still have a press, and are still using the one that they had twenty years ago. We finally had to scrap ours. We had to pay somebody to come and cut it out of the concrete floor and cart it away. We couldn't give it to the museum, the university...nobody wanted it, and it wasn't that old. It worked fine, but it wasn't the high-speed offset presses they're using today.



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## INDEXING NEVADA NEWSPAPERS: THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

*Susan Conway is the former head of the Serials Department at the University of Nevada, Reno Library.*

I have an extreme love of Nevada newspapers and indexing. I work in the Serials Department at the UNR Library, and we kind of look upon ourselves at UNR—especially in the Serials Department—as the keepers of the word. There are rows and rows and rows of cabinets of microfilm, and you know what those contain: newspapers from Nevada, and those are what I call gems and treasures. They are absolute treasures, but you cannot get to that information unless you have one thing. Obviously that one thing is an index. I have seen people poring over physical issues, people poring over all kinds of papers and microfilm, and they're not happy people. [laughter] That was one of my major considerations. I like to see people happy. I don't like to see people unhappy or grimacing or scowling or saying, "Don't you have a better way of doing this?"

It's part of my job, I feel, to answer a question when a person comes into the library. I cannot tell you how many times a person has come into the library and said, "You know, I'm trying to do a research project on air pollution in the Truckee Meadows. Now, I think I remember that the papers ran a real good article about that several weeks ago. Do you know what date that was so I can look it up?"

And you have to say, "Oh, God, I wish I could." Sometimes we'll call the Washoe County Library, because the Washoe County Library has a clipping file whereby they clip articles on everything they believe to be of importance, put them in a manila envelope, and organize them in a file cabinet. That's really helpful, but it's not the only answer. We had a man come up from Belmont last week. The man needs to know about the water rights in the city of Belmont, because he's in dire straits. If he doesn't find out when those water rights were given, the entire citizenry of Belmont could be losing their water rights. So

we're not just talking simple matters of, "Gee, I want to write an English 101 paper" here. The importance of newspapers in Nevada and all that they have to offer cannot be overstated. There is so much important and valuable information there.

Well, I got to calling myself a "born-again-Nevada-newspaper-indexing zealot" [laughter], because I love to give people what they want. There's information that people need from newspapers, and because there are no keys, there are no indexes to some of them, they're going to miss out on that information. Without the key they are lost.

Several months ago, there was a memo sent out to all departments at the university, and it said, "Anybody who wants to put out a proposal for a *worthy* project less than fifteen thousand dollars, submit it to the UNR Foundation."

At this time my number one priority, the number one need that I saw daily, was that people need keys to the Nevada newspapers, and there are many, many things that could be done with that. At the time all I was interested in was the Reno newspapers, because that's what I'm dealing with here and now. As Ev Landers said this morning: there are three major newspapers in the state of Nevada. Well, the two southern Nevada newspapers are being taken care of, but the Reno newspaper is not, and so I thought, this is my number one priority. I want to index that newspaper more than anything I can think of if given a chance to turn in a proposal. Well, that's when I truly became a zealot. I cannot tell you how...I mean, I kind of scared myself, I got so excited about it. Well, I had to do research into what was happening. I wanted to first make sure that nobody else was indexing the Reno newspapers currently. I began calling people and visiting people throughout the state of Nevada because I wanted to find out what

was happening, what was going to happen, and what had been done in the past, so that when I turned in this proposal I could find out exactly what I needed. I could give the basic background.

I want you all to know, if you don't know this right now, there are so many people in this state working in historical societies, in archives, in libraries, in personal homes, that are doing indexing on Nevada newspapers because of a sincere desire to share that information. It made me feel so good, I could hardly stand myself. I thought, "Oh gosh, I'm just doing this for my job." A personal friend is actually, in her own spare time, indexing the *Eureka Sentinel* because she has a desire to do that. There are many people within this state who are gathering information on indexing.

Special Collections was doing a survey. This information is gleaned from that survey, so that you have some idea who is doing indexing in the state, who has done indexing in the state, and what is happening.

Well, I haven't heard about my proposal yet, so all of you can cross your fingers. The people at the Washoe County Library have been very supportive; the people at the Reno newspapers have been very supportive; so I'm hoping that in the close future we can do something positive about indexing the *Reno Gazette-Journal* and the *Nevada State Journal*.

Most of you probably understand the importance of that key that I call indexing, and I'd like to share, to go through some of the very basics about newspaper indexing. What is an index, really? An index is an access to information; it is the key to getting into that information so that someone doesn't have to go through it page by page. It's great if you've got a lot of time and a lot of money. It's fun to read the newspapers, I think, but most people don't have that luxury, and of primary importance is access to information.

John Townley is going to speak later about researchers and how important it is researching into Nevada newspapers. It's a record of history, so you're going to have it for historical research. Ask any genealogist. How can you find out information about your family? Newspapers play a very important part in that research.

Another important reason that indexing needs to be done and continued is that, for example, if there is not an index to the Reno newspaper, what about things that happen in Sparks or what about things that happen in Washoe Valley? Nobody will ever know what that information is. Many libraries depend upon the *New York Times* index. If I want international information I can go to the *New York Times* index and get national dates, and then go to the *Gazette-Journal* and see what was the impact on us at that same time. Indexing is important in a broad sense. You might get some information gleaned from the *Nevada Appeal* about Gardnerville. It has a far-reaching benefit, not just in the town that the newspaper is representing.

Another very important area was mentioned this morning by Ev Landers: it's a great way of recording opinions. I was talking to Ann at the Nevada Historical Society about what she is currently indexing in the *Territorial Enterprise*. I asked, "What about editorials? Do you make a note if there was an editorial?"

And she said, just to show you my stupidity, "Susan, 90 percent of the *Territorial Enterprise* was editorial." [laughter] It's a very good means of finding out what opinions were like at that time. It may not be a representative sample [laughter], and, obviously, it may only be one person, but still you have some sort of a flavor for what was going on.

Another reason that I think that indexing is so important is that it shares

with you information about groups of people. Genealogists, for example, are going to look for names. They're going to look for families and what happened to those specific people at the time. Think about researching the Basques in Nevada; think about researching the Paiutes. There are specific groups of people that can also gain information from indexing, and it's not going to be found any other way.

I started talking to people all over the whole state, and I can't express enough how helpful people were in sharing their information and all of the work that they had gone through previously. I found that there are some people that, although they are not indexing, are maintaining clipping files. I'm sure most of you know what a clipping file is. For those of you who don't, a clipping file means that a university library or an archives buys a newspaper, clips out specific articles, puts a subject heading on that article, puts it into a manila envelope, and stores it in file cabinets. Those are very worthwhile pieces of information. If you choose the right subject heading, *zap*, you go to the file cabinet and you've got the entire article right here. You don't have to look from the index to the microfilm roll and find the page.

As with everything else, there are a couple of disadvantages with clipping files. Newspapers are very fragile pieces of paper. As someone so pointedly shared with us this morning, they're darned good for starting fires, so that means they're kind of flimsy. Not only are they fragile in that sense, but there are many people who are not very scrupulous. They believe this particular article was meant for *them* and they put it in their pocket, and you never see it again. If you go to this file thinking that you're going to have every single thing that the *Reno Gazette-Journal* has published on wood-burning stoves in Reno in the last fifty years, you could be very mistaken

about that, because maybe someone pilfered some of the articles. So there are distinct advantages and disadvantages to clipping files.

When I was talking to people one other thing that I found which was exciting and interesting was, who would be the best able to index? Would it be a historian, because they know what's important? I found historians doing indexing. I found librarians doing indexing. I found archivists doing indexing. I found volunteer senior citizens doing indexing. I found young CETA workers who were doing all kinds of indexing. I found teachers doing indexing. I found mail clerks doing indexing. It doesn't seem to matter. I guess that's why I became so involved, because I thought, "Hey, you don't have to be a Ph.D. in history to get excited about this and to do it well." I've seen some of the work these people have done and it's phenomenal how good some of the indexing is. It seems to be a desire to access that information.

Another thing that's important is accuracy. You don't want to put down the wrong date or the wrong page or misspell someone's name. Other than accuracy and a sincere dedication and desire, I can't think of too many other criteria to be a good indexer. Just like with anything else: you've got to have someone who's dedicated and accurate. Believe me, there are lot of people in this state that fit that qualification. I was so impressed at the zealotness of these people, it just caught fire.

Well, I was unaware, and I'll bet that some of you were, too, of the different kinds of indexing available for newspapers and of the major ways in which they are indexed. One way is a chronological order card index. As you can guess, chronological order is helpful if you know the date. If you don't know the date, you are not a very happy person, because instead of going through the newspapers page by page, you'll go through index cards one

by one. Chronologically, these would have the date—the year, the month, the day—and then go down page by page as to what was happening. Frequently this is listed by the title of the article, but not always. Sometimes the card would give you a synopsis as well. That was one method by which people indexed. Sometimes when you have a chronological index...I did find also that people had, as a supplement to that, an alphabetical name and subject index which is more...I believe what most people are familiar with.

Most indexing in the state still occurs on three-by-five-inch cards. There's nothing wrong with the good old three-by-five card. Ask libraries; they've been using them for years. You will frequently find in the three-by-five card index a broad subject heading on top. [Example is shown on screen.] The elections—Reno is differentiated from Sparks. Then they would have the date, and normally will not have the article title. You will have a synopsis of that article and the page number, and then there will usually be other different types of subject headings. Sometimes people include personal names. This example happened to be from the elections which were held on Tuesday, and there were many names listed. Most of the people that I spoke to doing indexing said they normally do not go beyond four index cards per article. When you have a case such as this, with many people running as candidates, the indexers want to have more information for genealogical aspects. Also, if they think this person is going into bigger political arenas, they will have that listed as well. But primarily in the card system you aren't going to find more than four cards per article. Sometimes they didn't need more than four cards per article, because there was nothing more in that article.

Well, what tended to be indexed in Nevada newspapers? Primarily the same things that are



in the newspapers. Most Nevada indexers do not index national news, for example. Most of them index how that national news may impact on their particular locality. They figure that you can go to the *New York Times* if you need national news. So, most indexing is done on a local level to fill local needs.

You find a wide variety, though. There were several projects done many years ago that just did names only. There are indexes that just have births, deaths, and marriages. There are other indexes that have all kinds of information. So there's a wide variety of indexing that has been done in this state.

What is happening now? There are many, many people who are indexing using the three-by-five cards still, and this is a viable means of indexing. There are some limitations, of course, with the three-by-five cards, because you have to go to that entity. For example, if I want to use the index of the *Las Vegas Age*, I'm going to have to go to Las Vegas or to the Nevada Historical Society in Las Vegas in order to be able to use their index. There's not enough money for those people to do the research for me and send it up. Although information is accessible, you're going to have to go to that index to use it.

This is when I got real excited. I started talking to the people at the State Library and at the Las Vegas Public Library and I found that several years ago they had begun indexing using a computer. Believe it or not, they're using the university computer, and I'm sitting right on top of it, and I didn't know it. I was so frustrated. I started to talk to people like Joan Kirschner, who has done a lot in the state for Nevada newspaper indexing, and Jack Gardner. They have paid for a program to run on the university computer. It sounds simple enough, and it wasn't all that expensive. It is a sorting kind of program, and what they are now doing is indexing newspapers monthly.

This is an example of what the index to the *Nevada Appeal* looks like. [Example is shown on screen.] As you can see, this is for 1984, from January through September 30. They input information every month, and get a cumulation of microfiche. These are then cumulated annually. This January to September is on two pieces of fiche. Do you know how much space this saves when you're talking about three-by-five cards or clipping files? It's phenomenal.

As you can see from the example on the screen, they're using broad subject headings, but then they break them down for more specifics. You've got access by personal name and other subject headings, plus you've got the date, the section, the page and the article number on each page for that index. It seemed so simple, and it seemed so complete. You only had to look at one particular index for an entire year for every single bit of information.

Well, I'm glad you're all seated, because the next bit of information just totally blew me away. Most people that index using cards have a maximum of four subject headings per article, right? Now, in my wildest dreams I cannot tell you when they told me there was a possibility not of four, not of ten...they have the capability of accessing one article forty-nine ways! You couldn't possibly miss that article's information. Truly. Forty-nine different approaches is what is possible using this program. Well, that is when I totally went bananas. I thought this has got to be done *now*. I was so tickled, and I talked to Terry, the gentleman that is indexing for the *Nevada Appeal*, and I said, "OK, well, how do you do this?"

He types it in on a computer, puts it onto a floppy disk, and every month he sends that floppy disk to Las Vegas to the computing center, and bingo, they send him back a little piece of plastic. But, before he does that—just

to show you the dedication that this man has, which is the same I found with indexers all over the state—he takes the information from that floppy disk, prints it out on a piece of paper first, because he wants to check himself. He doesn't want any typographical errors; he doesn't want it incorrect. I made a copy of one that he had done. This is the article. [Example is shown screen.] Most of the things on the left-hand side look like gibberish but are just numbers. *Five* stands for the *Nevada Appeal*. Then you've got the year, the month, the date, the section, the page, all of that information. The top line tells you the article's title. For everything else there are subject headings by which that article has been indexed. You've got the Northern Nevada Correctional Center, you've got the inmates involved, you've got the law. Then you have other methods by which people might be researching, so the genealogist to come will know and be able to gather that information.

I mean, I was so excited—well, I've already told you that—[laughter] but I think it's fantastic! Forty-nine different approaches to one article. You'd have to get the information that way, I believe.

The other impressive thing to me that the people at the State Library and at the Las Vegas Public Library have is they have chosen to cooperate. Now, think about it. If I'm going to index something using the little rudimentary cards that I made, then how did I choose that subject heading? I drew it out of thin air. Well,...these people were very thoughtful when they put together this program. They chose specific subject headings to use. They chose Library of Congress subject headings so that when any individual walked into that library, if they wanted to write something about the correctional centers in the state of Nevada, they could go to the card catalog using that subject heading, and then they

could go to the newspaper indexes in the state of Nevada and follow the same routine. They didn't have to think, "Gee, was it under penal institutions, or was it under prisons, or was it under correctional institutions?" They're standardizing the subject headings so that once you look, you will find what you need. Do you know how much cooperation that takes among people, especially historians? [laughter] You have to be willing to share, and you have to be able to do it so that everybody can benefit from it. I believe that they have done that.

The Library of Congress is not the last word in subject headings, and, believe it or not, there is no subject heading for gambling. It's kind of an important area in our state, so obviously there were subject headings that had to be agreed upon and had to be added to the Library of Congress's subject headings. They did this. They did this together so that everybody knew what was going to be used and could standardize it so that it was going to be available no matter where you were. I think that's quite an accomplishment.

I also think that just the sheer size of the index is an accomplishment when you're speaking about what can be done. This is what happened to Jack Gardner at the Las Vegas Public Library. He had cards and cards and cards, and his administration said, "Enough! You are not going to do one more card. We are going to burst from the inside, if not from books, from cards." I believe that the computerized system that is being used now is a very viable space-saving system in the state, as well.

Consider the future, what's going to happen with newspaper indexing? This can get really exciting! There are newspapers now that have—even the Reno newspapers—their articles put on a computer. If they had a method by which we could get into—by key

words, for example, the Reno elections—and it would list dates.... Then if you said, “Oh, yes, it was on June 5,” and you typed in June 5, there you would have it: the entire article about the June 5 election. You’d have the benefits of the clipping file, because you’d have the whole item on-line. And the beauty of it is there would be a printer right next to it, and you could press another button and you would have your own copy of that article. Everybody else after you would have that same capability. You wouldn’t take the only copy of the article.

I see that in the future we would go to on-line full text of newspapers. I don’t know if that’s going to happen in the next day or two—that everybody starts typing in word-by-word every single article that has ever been published in the *Nevada State Journal*, the *Reno Evening Gazette* and then the *Reno Gazette-Journal*—but the capabilities are going to be there soon for the current newspapers.

I hope I fired you up about newspaper indexing in the state of Nevada. Truly, there are lots of dedicated people out there and I want you to know that Nevada newspaper indexing is alive and well.

Thank you very much. [applause]



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## USING NEWSPAPERS FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

*Robert E. Blesse: John M. Townley, our next speaker, has done extensive work with Nevada newspapers in the books that he has written. In fact, when I came here to UNR three-and-a-half years ago, John was a fixture in our department, coming in six to eight hours a day to read microfilm. I don't know how he did it, to be honest with you.*

*John M. Townley was born, following what his mother believed was an acute case of writer's block. [laughter] He thereafter attended the University of Texas until 1954 and actually worked for a living as a geological engineer. Brought to Las Vegas in 1962 by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, he became interested in Nevada's past and enrolled in UNR's doctoral program in 1970. The rest, as they say, is history. He served as director of the Nevada Historical Society from 1972 until 1980, and today operates a non-profit foundation while writing a study of Reno and the Truckee Meadows. I should add that one of John's most recent publications, is a book called Tough Little Town on the Truckee-Reno 1868-1900, which he not only wrote but*

*published and printed himself. John will be talking to us today about using newspapers for historical research. [applause]*

John M. Townley: I guess I'm flattered that anyone would want to record this for posterity. When Bob came to me initially asking me to do this, I'd never really considered what I had learned in some twenty years of reading newspapers. I was kind of surprised to find that I'd put in twenty years reading Nevada newspapers; I had always considered myself about nineteen years old, so it was a chance for me to kind of consolidate what I had learned and, more especially, the techniques that I've developed for reading newspapers.

Newspapers themselves are a very complex medium, both good and bad. The historian, or anyone who reads newspapers—and it doesn't particularly have to be Nevada—is going to learn that there are many questionable items that you've got to filter out. The ability to filter for any kind of historian or scholar is a test of time and experience. I'm a local historian. That's a sort of minor subspecies of the larger

craft, and I deal particularly with Nevada and the Intermountain West. The newspapers are the largest single source of material that I have to comb through as original material. Nevada newspapers have more information for the historian than all other sources combined—all other. If you look at the footnotes in publications on Nevada, you are going to find that newspapers are cited there more often than any other material.

The most important single project ever conducted in this state for the study of its past was the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project, conceived in the late 1950s and done largely in the 1960s. This is where the university, the State Library and the Historical Society combined after someone had this idea which, believe me, I think is the greatest thing that has happened in the state ever: the collection and the microfilming of these past newspapers right from day one. This made information available to people all over the state through using inter-library loan to study aspects of Nevada's past. Before that you had to come to Reno to the Historical Society or go to Carson City where the State Library had a large collection of bound, old newspapers. It made the process of research very, very difficult, because most people who were working with them were somehow affiliated with the university and were academics; they only had the summer. Many times these places would be closed for one reason or another. I think if you went back and actually totalled up the amount of historical publications on Nevada, you'd find that as newspapers became available on film, there's a straight line projection right on up. There's been nothing else that's had the effect on the study of Nevada that simply putting its newspapers on microfilm did.

Another point—newspapers provide more detail on events and personalities than any other source. There's nowhere else that you

have such a compendium of information. Gross, great amounts of this stuff is there. Now, the other side of the coin, as Ms. Conway said, is indexing these things so that you can go in and get the information that you want.

The physical wreck you see before you is the result of spending twenty years [laughter] hunched over a microfilm reader. I am sure microfilm readers are all designed by sadists [laughter], because they have not considered the human body when they composed these things. They usually put a screen up, or you have to tilt back, or you could go down inside and your sinuses dripped. That's the next step, you know. If you could design a human microfilm reader then you're just that much further ahead.

I like the papers of individuals. Newspapers give an idea of a community over a long period of time in Nevada, virtually since communities existed. Archival information, and there's all too few, and bits of information on Nevada available in the papers, is simply going to be everything available for an individual or a company or some other entity. Newspapers give you an ebb and a flow. They also give you a wide span of opinion, because as editors come and go, attitudes in the paper come and go. As publishers come and go, you get different types of information appearing. I'll go into this later, because publishers themselves have their own idea about what should appear and what should not.

Back in the early 1960s I was doing a weekly local history column for the *Las Vegas Sun*. I would go in the evening to the city room and just sit down and listen to the stories that these guys were telling—the guys on the staff, the reporters—most of which was not published. Back in the staff room, if you could call that pigsty a staff room, there was a piece of paper on the wall from Hank Greenspun entitled: "These individuals' names will not appear in the *Las Vegas Sun*." And they did not, or else you heard

about it. Now this is the sort of thing that is part and parcel with understanding newspapers. They are not these grand and balanced—well, maybe they are—unbiased, open friends and tribunes of the people. They are not this, and you have to understand this going in, and you have to be able to filter the sorts of information that is true from that which is not.

Another point: prior to 1950 in this state there were very, very few compendiums of statistics kept. Even vital statistics don't appear in Nevada newspapers until the 1920s; in some small county papers they do not appear at all. Public offices did not keep statistics. Many statistics are lost. If you want to go back and recount barometers of social conditions—let's say the incidence of murder; the incidence of suicide; the incidence of riot; all forms of human activity—about the only place in Nevada where you are going to be able to go to a community and do this is through the community papers. Despite how much an editor may want to call a murder a suicide, it's very difficult to do when the rest of the town knows what went on in a certain barroom in Austin on a certain night. You've got to print the truth in the case of murder, although you will run across cases where it's attempted.

All right; so you do this. You can go to the papers, and you can reconstruct many of the different sorts of events and things that are important to the community only through the newspaper itself. Newspapers reflect the attitudes and biases of their publishers and their editors. You can summarize the opinions of those sorts of individuals in the papers by again going through and looking for the subtle thing which is opinion and attitude.

Nevada newspapers, thank God, employed editors who preferred the bludgeon to the point of a fine needle. They believed that beating someone to death was much better than simply obscurely poisoning them. It's

not that difficult to find out what these people really felt, and occasionally they will open up and tell you in these editorial columns...but not always. In fact, rarely.

A careful reading of the Nevada newspapers shows who are the leaders in the community. It is possible to see who the leaders were. You have two types of leaders. Now...what should I say...? All right, now, you are going to have the Bob Cashell syndrome, and I'm opening myself to libel here. [laughter] This is an individual who demands to be up front and associated with every statement that he makes regardless of how foolish it is. [laughter]

A subsection of this is going to be the Anne Martin syndrome, because we don't want to be sexist here. I was talking to a lady in her nineties not too long ago about Anne Martin, and we were going on about Anne as a girl. She had known her, and they'd both grown up about the same time, and they were fairly close. Finally, after I was asking all these obscure kinds of questions, she said, "Don't worry about it, I'll summarize her up for you. Anne Martin wasn't the sort of woman to be vice-president of anything." In one sentence she encapsulated the entire personality of this particular person.

On the other side, then, we have the George Wingfield syndrome, which is: a leader in a community and in a state, the like of which I don't think that we have ever had before or since, who put a news blackout on his social activities in Reno. The Reno newspapers between 1900 and 1950 maintain very, very elaborate society columns, where virtually everything anyone did appeared: birthday parties, someone leaving town to go for a weekend to San Francisco...all this sort of thing appeared. George Wingfield was such a private individual, he enforced a blackout on his activities. It is rare that you

find anything mentioned where he is a guest, although you know he is there. You will not find a list of people who appear at dinner or entertainments that he would throw in the home. He was so careful about his own personal life, his mother never appeared at one of his weddings, and she was living right in town. [laughter]

The values of a community...this is where newspapers perform a service that you will find nowhere else. Values of a community come through, good and bad. The attitudes of people come through, good and bad. The interplay of politics and economics—that's what newspapers printed in Reno. How residents enjoyed themselves and with whom—that's in there. That's one of the things that's been lost. [laughter] Today we don't have society columns. It's a pity, speaking as a historian, because I don't know who formed the groups of people contending for social status in this community. Today it's much tougher. Between 1900 and 1950, it was much simpler. Reno wants to remember itself through a golden haze—maybe of bourbon—as a quiet community of shady streets, homes, lovely churches and the rest of it, while it wasn't that at all. And how do you find this sort of thing out? Not by reading what's being printed today, but by going back to the newspapers of the time.

When things happen and who makes them happen, that's another thing that you will find. I'm describing subjective sorts of things, and the ability to even understand subjective events only comes with time. It's one of the things that indexes can fix. When data is picked up, accumulated and put into such masses of information that you can't deny it, the historian can be confident that this happened.

Differences between a specific community and the rest of the nation, this is what I love, because I'm having a great time with Reno.

Reno was unique. We would like to think, or perhaps California likes to think of itself, as leading the nation in social change for good and bad. You ought to put Reno up there somewhere, because it was doing things which today we accept as commonplace at a time when this was anathema to the rest of the country. Principally, I suppose, the reason I like the Reno period between 1900 and 1950, the first half of the century, is that it was such a unique town. It was truly unusual. At the same time the things that made it unusual were: wide open gambling; prostitution on a level that would make the Empire of Rome look like a birthday party; divorce available and welcome to anyone; and a wide-open society without any real parameters for anyone to get in, except a bank balance.

All of these things which were based upon an easy transiency and a sort of mystique of personal liberty—that would be the contemporary "me generation" parameters—were going on in Reno before World War I. The rest of the country looked on with horror and printed anything that they could see about Reno, because they were fascinated with it. Reno loved it because it brought people here. There was no Great Depression in Reno, by the way. At the same time...and there is a lovely quote from the Carson paper looking at Reno in the 1930s, which said, "Reno's preoccupation with divorce is like a carbuncle on the backside of a patient; the patient doesn't mind anyone noticing it, but he hates to have it treated." [laughter]

Then you can get into the different contending groups. Reno, like any other community, was not this broad group of friends who all cooperated for the community good. It was a dog and cat fight all the time, with one exception. Unlike many small towns, Reno could always pull together for major sorts of events, and these were always economic.



These have been the positive aspects of newspaper research, the sorts of things that you have to look out for. First, you've got to understand that everything that's printed is not true. It's going to be true, untrue, and somewhere in between. Every paper is different. We had two papers in this half century that I'm talking about: the old *Reno Evening Gazette* and the *Nevada State Journal*, now combined by our beneficent out-of-state-owned newspaper monopoly into the *Reno Gazette-Journal*.

Items that would appear and be totally accurate in one paper were editorially deleted or exaggerated in another, and consistently. The two papers hated each other. They were all contending for the same readers. News was routinely distorted, deleted or fabricated to satisfy the publisher. Can I alienate anybody else? [laughter] The publishers/owners were either financially indebted to Nevada's economic and political leadership and subject to restraints upon the publication of news, or they had purchased the newspaper plants as vehicles for their own political ambitions.

In much of this period two governors, two United States senators and a variety of lesser lights owned the Reno papers. They were traded around by people who were running for office or who were going to use public opinion for their own purposes. The twentieth century Reno press was much less open in dealing with the readers than the nineteenth century press. I started reading Reno newspapers from day one, in 1868, and I'm in 1933 now. I find less professional ethics and sense of morality on the part of the editorial staff in 1933 than in 1868. Now, somewhere we hope that this begins to change. I'm going to take public opinion polls here on whether or not it has. [laughter]

Hypocrisy regarding Nevada's easy divorce and open gaming statutes was

constantly a part of newspaper policy, and they never challenged the effects on Reno's citizenry. There were a lot of changes going on in Reno after 1900.... A lot of changes, most of them not for the better. There was not an instance that the paper was ever analyzing these changes and trying to fix the cost of a unique economic situation on the residents of this community—not one.

In sum, to read Nevada's newspapers uncritically would be tantamount to historical suicide. If you took what you see as being true, you're going to be as distorted as your sources. You've got to be critical, and this is true for the indexers, true for the historian. It takes time to understand what's going on in the newspaper theme, in their broad policy themes. You don't easily tumble to this, but there is one there usually. Newspapers are trying to do something. They've always felt themselves as molders of public opinion for good and bad. At the same time, they are quite willing to broadcast their code of ethics in an unblemished way.

Let me read you one. We have a change of ownership in the *Nevada State Journal* in 1922. A governor by the name of Emmet D. Boyle bought the paper, and he's announcing his particular policy that he's going to maintain as publisher of the paper: "There is no greater deterrent to wrongdoing than pitiless publicity, but if newspapers are not independent and fearless, the evildoer cannot escape. But the *Journal*, like all newspapers, does not count its heartlessness. It has occasion to suppress almost every day stories of wrongdoing, stories that would give distress to the innocent and bring odium upon those deserving others. Improper suppression, though, is a betrayal of the readers. Reform work and politics will not get far unless the work of the shady politicians is blazoned forth by the newspapers."

He's putting himself up. The newspaper in this community is going to keep government, keep business, keep you-name-it, on the straight and narrow. Well, suffice it to say he did not. I had a number of different instances here. I want to just go through one. Hypocrisy was really the one that is most fun to get to, because it's so easy to punch holes in individuals' pomposity and their own views of themselves. Let's just take the issue of divorce.

Before 1900 in Nevada there was a case of a rare individual of Washoe Valley divorcing his wife, a lady in Washoe Valley divorcing her husband. The two of them had obtained their divorces in district court that day and immediately turned around and remarried. Now, in 1933 this was what was happening with half the divorces that were being granted in Reno—half, 50 percent. Pre-1900, the good citizens of Washoe Valley could not stand this affront to morality. They gathered, marched upon the home where the honeymoon was taking place, dragged the groom out, tarred and feathered him, half drowned him under the town pump in Washoe City, and then kicked both of them on the V & T [Virginia & Truckee Railroad] and said, "Never darken the county again." This is the attitude that was prevalent pre-1900.

Let's go now to 1908, at a time when the divorce law in Nevada is so much less stringent than California and New York that people were starting to come to Nevada, and spending their six months in residency in order to get a divorce. There are some states that had no statute for divorce. If you were a resident of South Carolina, you simply could not get a divorce. In New York it was much more difficult than in Nevada. There were some grounds, but very difficult to do; yet society was changing, and divorce was one of these releases from pressure that was beginning to get a little more acceptable. The editor of the *Reno Evening Gazette* had this to

put out to the populace: "Let's either do one thing or another about this divorce business. We're a little crude. We do not maintain anything that has a semblance of a rigorous standard; neither do we make it as easy as we can. South Dakota has a little best of us..."

Then, South Dakota had the reputation that Reno does. So it says, "South Dakota has a little the best of us as things stand. It gets most of this traffic, but we're getting most of the shame. Let's have the accompanying bullion. In order to do this, I suggest that a law be passed making it possible to obtain a divorce by telegraph, telephone, special delivery letter. Sufficient cash, however, must accompany the demand and be distributed among the lawyers and business people so that the city might profit from this thoughtful statute. Place no limit on the grounds of their action, so the applicants shall not be put through the necessity of resorting to subterfuge or untruth. Somehow we ought to be able to put South Dakota out of business." [laughter]

Well, you know, they're starting to think about the possibilities for divorce here. You see editorials changing just a bit. Then, when the business starts to really hit good, we'd become here, locally, a Mayo Clinic to the distressed of the country. This is from the *Gazette* again: "It would seem that there is sorrow enough without compelling any man or woman to endure the unhappiness which comes from the marriage which turns out to be unfortunate. Just as the vision of a burning pit has ceased to trouble ordained glances into that other life, so might it be well for us to remove as far as possible the brimstone from this very present life of ours." Suddenly Reno, instead of dragging people out, tarring, feathering them and the rest of it, were going to offer a service here.

Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., came here for a divorce in 1929. He was kind of a nut,

but he prided himself as being an aspiring writer. He collected information about the divorce colony and put it into a book and published it. When this hit the streets, why, it just infuriated everybody because he called a spade a spade. He was interested in selling, so it was a sensational piece of information. The Chamber of Commerce holds a special meeting and the mayor announces to the press this “unwarranted attack, contemptible wrong, violates hospitality...” You can see they were really hurt about that. [laughter]

And this [was] at a time when there were two flights in 1929, coming from San Francisco and Los Angeles, and the flights were called the “alimony special.” [laughter] Everybody knew what was going on in Reno. Reno thrived on this publicity, but you dare not say anything about this publicly. The worst that a person could do locally, which would get them ostracized, would be to admit what was going on.

In the middle of the 1930s the defenses against this came out through the editorial column and said: “We want people to come here and see the ‘real’ Nevada: the golden sunsets, the majestic mountains, the mysteries of far-flung deserts, the gem-like lakes. Nevada’s lore of historical background is lost on these minds sodden with alcohol and having warped sex complexities...” [laughter] It says, “These stories will show only the dregs of our social structure.” Well, it’s true, but we had a rather bizarre social structure in this town. [laughter]

I want to end on one of my little gems that came from reading the papers. If you’re interested in poetry in the state you’ll find it not within books, but within the newspapers. In the mid-1930s there was a tremendous drive to make Nevada a tourist state, as well as one renowned for wide-open gambling and the rest of it. This one reporter from

Yerington came up with an imaginary story with a warped anthropologist who has appeared out here, probably to get a divorce. He said that he had discovered the Garden of Eden in Nevada—in Mason Valley. If you’ve ever travelled to Mason Valley, well, you know, it can’t possibly be the source.... In San Francisco, one of the newspapers put together a little poem about this which was not, by the way, in Reno. It’s called “Nevada’s Secrets”:

Lo, the rocks are story-telling  
in Nevada,  
By inscriptions most compelling  
in Nevada.  
Prehistoric news is imparted  
and the secret is imparted  
what our earthly troubles started  
in Nevada.  
For they found the site of Eden  
in Nevada.  
And the funny marks they’re readin’  
in Nevada,  
The ancient tombs did dabble show  
that Eve performed the grapple  
with the serpent and the apple  
in Nevada. [laughter]  
Woman first obtained the knowledge  
in Nevada  
And made hubby lose attraction  
that inspired a jealous action  
and incurred dissatisfaction  
in Nevada.  
Let the marks of snakes and horses  
in Nevada  
Serve as scientific sources  
in Nevada.  
But for tales of life to glean-o  
there are better records we know  
in the district court in Reno, [laughter]  
in Nevada.

Thank you. [applause]



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## THE NEVADA NEWSPAPER MICROFILMING PROJECT

*Karen Gash is the archivist at the University of Nevada, Reno Library. She is coauthor of Newspapers of Nevada: A History and Bibliography 1854-1979.*

Many of you have been contacted by me in the past concerning your newspaper holdings. I identified myself as being with the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project and gave a very brief explanation of what we were trying to accomplish: that is, to locate and microfilm all known Nevada newspapers. Today I would like to give a brief history of the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project, and name some of the people and the agencies involved so that you will better understand the new newspaper project that Bob Blesse will explain next.

Nevada's newspapers—both historical and current—are scattered throughout the state and the country. The University of Nevada, Reno has been involved in locating and microfilming these papers for well over twenty years. In the past, various agencies had holdings, but there wasn't a comprehensive

listing of who had what newspaper, either in the microfilm format or in the physical format. The university's own newspapers were difficult to use because of space and storage, as were the State Library's and the Nevada Historical Society's. Systematic study—the key word is *systematic*—and use of the newspapers was difficult if not impossible.

In the early 1960s the Desert Research Institute had a committee on Nevada newspapers. In 1962 this committee was approached by the Department of History and Political Science at the University of Nevada to begin a program of microfilming Nevada's newspapers. This was part of a proposed program by the University Library and the Department of History and Political Science to develop the library's holdings in both western American history and Nevada history. The objective was both to preserve this valuable source material and to increase access to it.

It was formally announced in January 1963 that the University of Nevada was undertaking an extensive program of

microfilming Nevada's newspapers of the past in order to preserve an important part of the state's rich historical heritage. This project was sponsored by the Desert Research Institute, the University of Nevada Library, the Friends of the University of Nevada Library, the Department of Journalism, and the Department of History and Political Science. Later that year, in March 1963, the Nevada State Library joined the program, and Nevada Southern (which was to be renamed the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 1969) followed in October. It was now a cooperative program between three agencies: the Nevada State Library, the University of Nevada, and Nevada Southern. These three agencies were to receive the film resulting from the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project for the use of researchers.

It was suggested that John Folkes, then a graduate student in history, be hired to begin the program of microfilming Nevada's newspapers. He was at that time preparing a bibliography of Nevada newspapers—listing where various Nevada papers could be found. Consequently, it logically followed that he would be in a position not only to locate but to film Nevada's newspapers. Folkes's first objective was to microfilm or obtain microfilm for those newspapers not available at the University Library, the State Library or the Nevada Historical Society. For the next year, John Folkes went from county to county microfilming newspapers and also gathering bibliographic data for his book, *Nevada Newspapers*, which was published by the University of Nevada Press in 1964.

At the same time Jack Gardner of the Nevada State Library made arrangements for microfilming its holdings of early Nevada papers. By December 1964, though, the committee on Nevada newspapers had disbanded, and Folkes had left the project. The

University Library at Reno then assumed the direct responsibility of the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project, with Ruth Donovan acting as coordinator.

It was over the next few years that the University Library and the Nevada State Library would more clearly define a collection policy, the most important division of labor being that the university would be responsible for filming and collecting papers prior to 1950 and the Nevada State Library would collect and film after 1950. The university also continued the project by purchasing microfilm from outside institutions that had Nevada papers, such as the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California. This film was also distributed among the participating agencies.

In March 1967 two new coordinators for the project were named: Ann Amaral for the State Library, and Linda Bridges for the University of Nevada Library. Linda Bridges was also one-half time in the University Archives, which had just been established in 1966. They worked to establish procedures, ordered needed film and tried to collate what was on film with what was not on film.

About this same time Richard Lingenfelter, through Robert Armstrong, suggested working together to revise his earlier book, *The Newspapers of Nevada: 1858-1958*, published also in 1964, by John Howell Books. Since there was to be a more detailed editing of the pre-1950 newspapers, it would be possible to check the information against his book, noting additions and changes.

A major addition to the project came in 1968 when the Nevada Historical Society, then under director Marion Welliver, allowed its vast holdings of Nevada papers to be inventoried and checked by the project, but it wasn't until 1970 that the Nevada Historical Society formally joined the project and allowed its holdings to be microfilmed. It was

also at this time that the Nevada State Library gave its earlier papers to the University of Nevada, Reno, and the Nevada Historical Society. The Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project was now a cooperative program between the Nevada Historical Society, the Nevada State Library, the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). This arrangement currently continues. The Nevada Historical Society's addition to the project made it imperative to edit the newspapers already on microfilm against the physical issues.

I came to the project in 1972, and also divided my time between the project and the University Archives. Linda Bridges had spent a considerable amount of time inventorying the newspapers at the Nevada Historical Society and at Stead, where the physical issues for both UNR and the State Library are stored, but the film still had not been fully edited. Using the card files that my predecessors had left for each title, I began with the letter "A" and worked my way through the alphabet of newspaper titles. The film was read for missing and damaged issues, title changes and frequency, and the names of editors and publishers. All this information was entered on work cards. After the film had been edited, I then tried to locate the missing issues and film them.

In 1974 the Nevada Newspaper Project received a grant-in-aid from the Nevada State Library, and I went full-time with the newspaper project. Hiring students to read the film helped speed up the film editing and made collating and filming easier and faster. A contract was also arranged with Bay Microfilms, Inc., in Palo Alto, California. In the past all the original negatives created by the project were stored with a now defunct microfilming company in Salt Lake City. These were sent to Bay Microfilms to be stored

in their archivally-monitored vault with all the proper conditions for the film's protection, such as humidity, light, and temperature control. We were now able to splice new holdings, filmed by Bay Microfilms, into the old runs, and Bay Microfilms could provide copies on demand.

We did the actual microfilming either in Reno or at Bay Microfilms in Palo Alto, depending on who loaned the paper and how long it could be loaned. Usually, issues that could be borrowed for a longer period of time were collected, collated at UNR, and hand-delivered to Bay Microfilms. If the issues were too fragile or had to be quickly returned, we made arrangements with the Washoe County Reproduction Department to microfilm, and then sent the negative film to Bay Microfilms for copies and storage.

When the copies were received by the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project, they were spliced into the current film holdings and then distributed. Despite the fact that there had been years of previous groundwork, numerous problems arose. Cooperation for borrowing needed physical issues varied from county to county, publisher to publisher, and person to person. I found so many different methods of record keeping—even with the project's records—that it was sometimes impossible to decipher who had the exact holdings and what they were. We wrote and called for information, trying to find out the exact holdings and if we could borrow the issues. We also asked about publishers and publishing dates, and often received conflicting information. We frequently relied on the newspapers themselves for information—also not always accurate.

In 1976 the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project officially ended, but not the commitment. I was transferred back to the

University Archives, but continued to work on newspapers, too. I am still working on the pre-1950 newspapers. It is the nature of a project this big and complex that new holdings and information continually appear and change. Other agencies outside Nevada also purchase or receive early Nevada papers, and we must be conscious of these so that the film can be purchased and integrated into current holdings for the use of our researchers.

We have continued to film runs and holdings not formerly available, and we continue to update our bibliographic information on both the old and the new newspapers. In 1984 the University of Nevada Press published the revised bibliography of Nevada newspapers, titled *The Newspapers of Nevada, 1854-1979*. It updated the two previous histories by Folkes and Lingenfelter and lists over 800 publications with thumbnail sketches on each. It also lists the holdings on microfilm that are available at UNR, UNLV, the State Library, and the Nevada Historical Society.

Essentially, that's the history of the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project, but I would like now to mention an observation I've made. Over the years I have seen numerous users of early Nevada newspapers: genealogists, historians, journalists, and students learning how to do research. The one thing that has become very evident to me is that many people assume that the information is somewhere. They *assume* it's at the county recorder's office. They *assume* it's at the Bureau of Vital Statistics. They *assume* it's already in some other book. When they can't locate what they assumed was so easily locatable, they turn to the newspapers for that time and that place. I've seen it when the newspapers have helped prove a point, located the missing ancestor, established the birthdate for social security benefits, or showed the development

of some aspect of Nevada life. That is the goal of microfilming newspapers—to save not the newspapers only, but the information they contain. And just not the old newspapers either, but the current ones, because they are already history.

The Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project is a cooperative program, and the procedures developed during this period have made it possible for this comprehensive, important source of information to be preserved. This new grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, with the eventual utilization of the computer, will make it possible to update holdings and information and ensure the continuation of a very beneficial program.



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## THE NEVADA NEWSPAPER PROJECT: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

*Robert E. Blesse is head of the Special Collections Department at the University of Nevada, Reno Library, and is also project director of the Nevada Newspaper Project.*

Robert E. Blesse: A few years ago the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), which is helping to sponsor this conference, had a great idea: What if we tried to preserve all the newspapers in the United States? Well, you just heard Karen talk, and we had the jump on them a long time ago here in Nevada.

Nevada alone has had over 800 newspaper titles since 1854, and about 70 or so are still being published. In the 300 years that newspapers have been published in this country, there have been over 300,000 newspaper titles, so NEH had a big idea and a big job in front of them. The United States Newspaper Project is a very admirable project. Basically, its objectives are to catalog every existing issue of every newspaper that has been published in the United States.

Initially, grants were given to six institutions: the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts; the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago; the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland; and the state historical societies of Kansas, New York and Wisconsin. These, along with the Library of Congress, began cataloging their newspaper holdings.

The newspaper records are catalogued through a project called the Conser Project, C-o-n for conversion and s-e-r for serials. This is a larger project than just newspapers, because it also includes periodicals and magazines. To date, the twenty libraries that are participating in the Conser Project have cataloged approximately 600,000 serial records into the Conser data base.

The Conser cooperative project inputs records via the On-line Computer Library Center (OCLC), which contains ten million records. This is an on-line system which many, many libraries in the United States use to catalog books and serials and newspapers.

It's done via telecommunication—a hookup directly with OCLC in Ohio. Basically, what the Conser Project will end up to be is a bibliographical record of serials records in the United States, and these records can be used by other libraries in cataloging their own serials. For example, if we wish to catalog a certain newspaper title, we can search the Conser data base, and if someone else has already cataloged it, we can use their cataloging copy to create our own record. It saves time.

The six initial repositories have cataloged about 30,000 titles, which leaves a good 270,000 titles yet to be done. In order to do this, NEH has come up with a second series of grants. They are giving a grant to each state and to a major repository in that state to work on cataloging that state's newspapers. Again, there are three parts: first is the planning stage, which is what Nevada is involved with right now—this conference being part of it. Secondly is bibliographic control, which is the cataloging of the records into the data base. And the third phase is preservation, in which newspaper records will be microfilmed.

The goal in each state is to survey and locate complete runs of every newspaper ever published in that state. Along with that, something that became a little controversial for a while is that they want us to catalog the newspaper holdings in Nevada of other states—the rationale being that if we put other states in our records, once they're all in the national data base, other states might even find newspapers in Nevada that they don't have in their own state.

The NEH first selected eighteen states to participate in the first round of projects—large states like California and New York, and small states such as Hawaii and Montana. Nevada received its planning grants, I think, due to the efforts of Karen Gash and the Nevada Newspaper Microfilming Project, and the support from the

Nevada State Library, the Nevada Historical Society, the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, other historical societies, and individuals just interested in supporting Nevada history.

What we are trying to do in this first planning stage is to build statewide support for the project. We need all of you and we need a lot of others in the state of Nevada to help us with the project and to cooperate with us. We need the support of historians, newspaper publishers, librarians, archivists and the general community who are interested in Nevada history. I think you've already heard today that newspapers are certainly important to us in the study of our state's history. Because of the work of Karen and Richard Lingenfelter and John Folkes, we really have a jump on the other states. If you're familiar with Karen's book, you'll see that it's an extremely comprehensive listing of Nevada newspaper titles.

We were extremely fortunate last week. We had a joint conference at UNR of the Society of California Archivists and the Conference of Inter-Mountain Archivists. One of our speakers was Jeffrey Field. Jeff is assistant director of the preservation program at NEH, but he is also in charge of the United States Newspaper Project and has worked very closely with us in our grant. I corralled him and took him upstairs to the University Archives and showed him all of Karen's files and the things that we have up there, and he was extremely impressed. He feels that we've done a tremendous amount of work that's certainly going to benefit us in the second and third phases.

What we've done so far is send out a survey to libraries, county recorders and newspaper publishers, and asked them to give us lists of their holdings of newspapers. We will compare these reported holdings against what we already know exists to see if there are any newspapers that we have not

been able to find. We really hope to learn through this project of issues that previously we didn't know about, including issues that are in private hands. When we know how many titles and issues we're really going to be dealing with, then we're going to move on to stage two.

In stage two, if we receive the grant, we'll catalog these newspapers into the Conser data base via OCLC and will be hiring a full-time serials cataloger and a library assistant to work on the project. Certainly our visit from Mr. Field and the things that we've already done in Nevada are going to be very helpful to us in writing this grant. It's, in many ways, not a competitive situation. We're not really competing for grant money like a lot of other grant proposals do. They *want* to give us the money. They want us to catalog our newspapers, but it's up to us to do a good job and to put a good proposal together.

The third stage of the project will be to find all of the newspapers that are not currently microfilmed, and to have these microfilmed so that we'll have them available and preserved. We're also going to review the quality of the existing film that we have. Microfilms can vary in quality, and there might be blurry pages. We're going to have to read over a lot of the microfilm, particularly the film that has been generated for papers issued after 1950. It's a wonderful job. You sit in front of a microfilm reader and put it on slow and just watch the microfilm [laughter] go across in front of you, and you look for things like Karen mentioned: missing issues, title changes and various other things; editors...changing of editors and publishers, all information that is important to have in the cataloging part of it. I cannot think of doing that for more than an hour before I'd run screaming from the building. Hopefully, we'll find an individual—perhaps like John—

who has twenty years of experience in reading microfilm.

The third part of the grants, the preservation stage, requires matching money. We're going to be out trying to raise money. If it costs us thirty thousand dollars to do the microfilming that we need to do, we're going to have to get out there and raise fifteen thousand dollars. So it's going to involve in our second stage some thinking about trying to raise money to match NEH.

Are there any questions at all about the project?

*Do you have an end product in mind?*

We'll have to think about that. I'm not sure. Karen's book is so comprehensive that we already have a pretty complete guide to the newspapers of the state. I think maybe it will depend on what we find. If we find a lot that we don't know about already, then maybe we might think about something like that. Everything that's input into OCLC will be available through that data base, but, of course, most libraries in the state don't have OCLC. The university library here at UNR uses a different utility. We use the RLIN (Research Library Information Network) system, which is similar to OCLC. We were told that within about a year the technology will be so developed that we will be able to put our OCLC records into RLIN and they will be available here to be searched. I think we're just going to have to look at the whole thing to decide what we are going to do in that area.

*Is indexing a part of the project, or will it be considered as another stage of the grant?*

Indexing is not included in the U.S. Newspaper Project. It is certainly something

that Nevada needs to start thinking about, and certainly there is possibly federal and/or state money available to fund projects like that.

*I'm a native of Nevada, and I happen to be a coin dealer by profession. Because I deal in older things, I am aware that a lot of private citizens in the state have very old newspapers, sometimes in their family boxes. I would just like to throw out a comment. I think that if an effort was made by archivists and librarians, and possibly even through the press, to put out an advertisement for people to send in coupons if they have documents or papers that pertain to a certain era....*

We certainly plan to use the press. We put out a press release about this conference, and we got some very good coverage outside the Reno area. We got about, I'd say, a good half inch in the *Gazette-Journal*. [laughter] I'll have to talk to Ev Landers about that. But it's very important to us. Not only is it an important way to find out about collections of newspapers, but NEH likes publicity. It's good for us to put that kind of thing in our second grant proposal [laughter] that I'll be writing this summer.

*With regard to the Nevada newspapers, can you give me an idea what proportion of the newspapers are available that we know existed?*

Karen can probably answer that question better than I.

Karen Gash: Probably a good proportion—about 80 to 90 percent.

We are really in very good shape here in that area. One other comment I might make, too: Someone asked me about physical copies as opposed to microfilm copies. None of us

really like to read microfilm, but I'm afraid it's a fact of life and certainly a way of preserving newspapers. We are not going to be collecting physical copies of newspapers. We want to find the newspapers, and we want to microfilm them, but, face it, they're all going to deteriorate some day. The technology is not there, really, to preserve these newspapers. Many of them are so far gone already that they can't be used at all. You try to turn the pages, and they literally fall apart. You know what your newspaper looks like if it sits in the sun for a day, and that's a pretty good indication of what's happening. Our goal with this project is to microfilm the newspapers for preservation, using the highest standards for the microfilm itself.

*Audience: What might they require of you if you want to go to the Historical Society to review some of these, or the White Pine County Library? You want to just research some papers. Are there any restrictions?*

Well, it depends on the repository. What we're attempting to do is to microfilm all the newspapers. Then, through the Nevada Microfilming Project, the microfilm is available at the four major repositories in the state. There's no restrictions on the newspapers there at all. What you might run into elsewhere in the state is something that you just have to deal with. It depends, but I think so much of it has now been microfilmed that it is available on inter-library loan. If you're out in the hinterland and you can't travel to a place, it's possible through your local library to get it on inter-library loan.

If those are all the questions, thank you for attending today's conference.

